External Communication in Social Media During Asymmetric Conflicts: A Theoretical Model and Empirical Case Study of the Conflict in Israel and Palestine

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Bernd Hirschberger

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA DURING ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS

A Theoretical Model and Empirical Case Study of the Conflict in Israel and Palestine

[transcript] PoliticalScience

Bernd Hirschberger
External Communication in Social Media During Asymmetric Conflicts

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Dedicated to my parents Anja and Franz-Xaver and all who supported my research

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A Theoretical Model and Empirical Case Study of the Conflict in Israel and Palestine

[transcript]

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1. Introduction

1.1 Wars of words and images – The effectualness of pictures and stories of war and their strategic exploitation by conflict parties

Pictures and stories of war make a difference.

In their recent contributions to the study of conflicts and peace scholars like Mary Kaldor (Kaldor 1999 & 2013) and Chistopher Daase (Daase 1999) have demonstrated that modern conflicts are complex and embedded in a global context of interactions and interdependencies. The outcome and development of a conflict, therefore, is not simply determined by the military capacities of the actual conflict parties ("hard power") but is also shaped by socio-cultural factors, such as the image of the conflict parties, their credibility, the perception of shared values and moral support ("soft power") (cf. also Nye 2008; Nye 2009): In the modern globalized world, many conflicts attract the attention of even those countries that are far away from the actual center of the conflict (Yarchi 2016: 291f.). This can stimulate external moral, diplomatic, economic or even military interventions by state, or private, actors (Jakobsen 1996). These interventions can have a significant impact on the course of the conflict, as they can provide valuable support for a conflict party or they can assert pressure on a conflict party. The image audiences abroad have of a conflict and its actors influences whether external actors intervene in a conflict or not. And, if external actors decide to intervene, the image of the conflict and its actors they have influences what kind of measures they choose for their intervention (cf. Kaldor 1999: 57-68 using the example of the war in Yugoslavia as an illustration; Yarchi 2016: 292f.).[1] On the one hand, negative pictures and stories from conflict are proven to encourage mobilization against conflict parties. On the other hand, however, it is noteworthy that positive pictures and stories can also mobilize in favor of conflict parties:

1 Moreover, Autesserre observed that the focus of the reporting about conflict also influences which activities aiding NGOs choose: In the 2000s media reports increasingly stressed the role of sexual violence. In the following time, NGOs more frequently initiated campaigns related to this topic (Autesserre 2014: 138).

Negative pictures and stories can mobilize against a conflict party.

The picture "The Terror of War", a photography by Nick Ut from 08th of June 1972 shows a group of children fleeing from their home village, the village of Trảng Bàng. A South-Vietnamese airplane had accidentally dropped napalm on the village, an incendiary weapon said to have caused more damage than the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Guillaume 2016: 1+7; cf. also Neer 2013). The children are fleeing from the heat and the fire the napalm had caused. In the center of the picture is a naked girl, the 9-year old Kim Phuc, later known due to the picture as the "Napalm Girl". Her face shows an expression of pain and horror. She had to rip off her burning clothes while running, screaming "Too hot! Too hot!". Her skin is peeling off from her body due to the injuries which had been caused by the burn (TIME Magazine 09.09.2016; CNN 27.09.2016: image 19; Business Insider 03.12.2018; Welt 07.03.2013; Harris 2018) (*For copyright reasons the picture cannot be printed here. However, the image can be accessed online, e.g. on the website of the US National Gallery of Arts: https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.136637.html, accessed on 03.08.2020*).

Pictures like the picture of "The Terror of War" depicting the cruelties of the war in Vietnam went around the world (Harris 2018: 194). This picture has been even listed by the TIME Magazine (TIME Magazine 01.11.2016) as being one of the most influential pictures of all time. CNN deemed it one of the most iconic images as well (CNN 27.09.2016: image 19). Moreover, the picture was awarded in 1973 with the title "World Press Photo of the Year" (World Press Photo Foundation s.a.) as well as a Pulitzer Prize (The Pulitzer Prizes 09.03.2016). Indeed, pictures such as "The Terror of War" shocked the world, fueling public protests and helping activists in the Western world to mobilize against the US engagement in the war in Vietnam (Guillaume 2016: 8; Miller 2004[2]).

Similar pictures and stories of the cruelties of wars and the conflict parties fighting in these wars have been published and circulated for other conflicts, too. Pictures of the abuse of detainees in the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib published in 2004 by CBS News (BBC 16.05.2018; Aljazeera 01.10.2017; CNN 04.03.2019), or the video titled "Collateral Murder" showing US soldiers firing with heavy weaponry at unprotected civilians published in 2010 by Wikileaks (Wikileaks 05.04.2010), for example, harmed the reputation of the USA worldwide. Similar to the Vietnam War such pictures raised questions about the necessity and legitimacy of military involvements and about how they are conducted and created outrage against conflict parties. All of these examples, therefore, clearly show that negative pictures and stories from conflicts can mobilize against conflict parties and their involvement in the corresponding conflicts.

2 Cf. also Westwell (2011: 13) with a differentiated assessment of the effectualness of images from the Vietnam War such as "The Napalm Girl".

Positive pictures and stories can help to mobilize support in favor of a conflict party.

Another unnamed picture from an unknown author shows a female fighter smiling and showing the V sign as a gesture of victory. The picture was shared multiple times on social media and was also taken up by many traditional forms of mass media (*For copyright reasons the picture cannot be printed here. However, the image can be accessed online, e.g. in an article of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty from the 27th of October 2014: https://www.rferl.org/a/under-black-flag-rehana-kurdish-female-beheaded-islamic-state/26660097.html, accessed on 03.08.2020*).

The woman is known by the pseudonym Rehana. The woman depicted in the picture, however, was given the nickname "Angel of Kobane" as a means of heroifying her on social media. Alongside the picture and the nickname, the myth was spread that the woman had killed more than a hundred Daesh fighters as a sniper fighting for the Kurds in Northern Syria (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty 27.10.2014; Ibraaz 01.06.2016; Digg 17.11.2014; Hotech 22.10.2014).

The image and the related stories are not only a heroification of the depicted woman, but they also serve as a visualization of the extraordinary contribution made by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (PYD) in the fight against Daesh, a group which is perceived in the Western world as evil because of their conducting of gruesome terrorist attacks in many parts of the world, including the Western world. At the same time, the image also serves as a testimony for the progressive values of the PYD by showing that women and men fight in the PYD on equal footing, something that would be inconceivable for most other groups in the Middle East (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty 27.10.2014). All of this has helped to justify international interventions in favor of the Kurds in Syria and Iraq despite links of the former to the PKK, which is deemed by many countries as a terrorist organization, despite links of the Northern Syrian PYD's ideology to Marxism and despite criticism of the NATO ally Turkey (cf. also Kardaş & Yeşiltaş 2017).

Already in past conflicts like World War II depictions and narrations about war heroes and their heroic deeds were used to generate support for involvements in conflicts (Foley 2015: 9ff.; Bray 1995; cf. also Murray 2000; Koppes & Black 1990). Pictures of the cheering "liberated" civil population, for example, have been useful for mobilizing support (an approach employed e.g. also by Daesh in the third issue of its Dabiq Magazine[3]). In the Gulf War in 1990/1991, moreover, the euphemizing framing of the conflict as a war fought with extraordinary, "surgical" precision was used. It could increase the acceptance of the military involvement significantly (White 1994: 133f.; cf. also Habermas 1999). All of these examples, therefore, clearly

3 Accessible online via: Clarion Project (2014): Dabiq Magazine, Issue 3: page 15; cf. also Gentile 2017: 67.

show that positive pictures and stories from conflicts can mobilize in favor of conflict parties and their involvement in the corresponding conflicts.

Other examples, furthermore, show that not only positive pictures and stories from conflicts can generate support for conflict parties. Not conflict-related pictures and stories do so as well. Many Arabic countries, for example, showcase the luxury they can afford as oil-exporting countries (cf. e.g. Zeineddine 2017) and can thus distract onlookers, to a certain extent, from human rights violations happening in the corresponding countries or from involvements in bloody wars like the civil war in Yemen.[4]

Pictures and stories can be used during conflicts strategically.

As the literatures on propaganda and persuasion (e.g. Spring 2011), strategic communication (e.g. Mor 2007) and public diplomacy (e.g. Melissen 2005: 13f.; Mor 2006; Pratkanis 2009) show,[5] pictures and stories are not only effective, and for this reason powerful, but that this power of communication and notions can be (and is) used by conflict parties to support their own interests (respectively what they perceive to be their interests) by strategically preparing and designing their communication and strategically selecting arguments and the content of their external communication.

Many conflict parties nowadays, indeed, acknowledge the relevance of the image of the conflict and its actors. And many conflict parties have started to realize

4 Cf. e.g. New York Times 20.10.2018, reporting about the efforts of the Saudi government to present their country as "vibrant" and their efforts to silence opponents. The article, however, does not distinguish clearly between domestic and external communication. In other parts of the world the use of branding to distract from human rights violations can be observed as well (c.f. e.g. Transparency International 29.01.2019 about the case of Azerbaijan).

5 Some constructivist authors and approaches describe the possibility to use pictures and stories strategically, too. Finnemore and Sikkink e.g. argue that actors can become "norm entrepreneurs" and that they retain the capacity to strategically (re)construct their social environment (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998: 910; Chwieroth 2009: 14). Similarly, proposing a "strategic constructivism", Jabko points out that notions and communicating are an attractive and valuable resource and tool to influence (Jabko 2006: 8) and that actors can resort to notions "to articulate and advance their interests" and that, therefore, notions are valuable resources, in particular in settings with tensions between competing actors (Jabko 2006: 8; cf. also Eberlein & Radaelli: 783). This characterization of notions and communication resembles also the characterization of Weishaupt who describes notions, referring to Blyth, as "strategic weapons" in the competitive political battle for control (Weishaupt 2011: 46, referring to Blyth 2002). Also other concepts, such as "rhetorical action" (Schimmelfennig 1997: 219ff.) and the approach of a "discursive institutionalism", as proposed by Schmidt (Schmidt 2008a; Schmidt 2008b), describe impactful strategic uses of communication and Balzacq emphasizes the importance of integrating the possibility of strategic purposes of communication within the field of securitization (Balzacq 2005: 173).

that they can use their external communication to influence this image by strategically influencing audiences abroad. A good example for such an actor, for which corresponding considerations have become a central part of its strategic planning, are the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), as their 2015 military doctrine illustrates well: To react to the challenges with which it is confronted within its strategic environment the IDF describes that it wants to broaden its strategic focus from a classical approach focused only on the military combat in the battlefield and conventional (interstate) warfare to a new "multidiscipline concept"[6] encompassing „military, economic, legal, media, and political"[7] aspects. "Achieving and maintaining legitimacy"[8] is described as the paramount goal of the new approach. To achieve this goal the IDF has included in its 2015 doctrine a "campaign" that "has both defensive and offensive aspects".[9] On the one hand, it aims at "creating legitimacy for Israel (including freedom of action for the IDF)".[10] This means the IDF wants itself and the State of Israel to be perceived in a positive light: It wants to be well-accepted by the Israeli population as well as by the international community (especially by the most important institutions and the governments and the public of particularly important foreign countries). It wants to convey its actions in a way making them perceived as appropriate and necessary or even positive to avoid negative interventions and to mobilize support. Building up a capability to achieve legitimacy "should [according to the 2015 IDF doctrine especially] take into account the power of the media through mechanisms operating in the short term and by planning and synchronization between operations on the battlefield, the perception-public relations effort and the legal effort"[11]. On the other hand, it simultaneously aims at "delegitimizing the enemy ([and] thereby restricting its moves)", [12] i.e., it wants the opponents of the State of Israel to be perceived in a negative light[13] and thereby annihilate arguments for supporting these enemies or even trigger interventions against them by providing arguments to do so. Therefore, it is perceived as important by the IDF to "take into consideration the state of legitimacy in assessing the overall situation and adapt relevant components from the processes involved in

6 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 31.
7 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 31.
8 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, headline for paragraphs no. 34-36.
9 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 34.
10 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 34.
11 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 5, paragraph no. 34.
12 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 34.
13 Cf. also IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 5, paragraph no. 33, section A; the IDF concept of a "war over perceptions" has been also been paraphrased as a "war for hearts and minds" that is directed to multiple audiences (cf. Shavit 2016: 28+36): toward the own domestic population to maintain support, toward the enemy's followers and civil population to break the popular will, the "civil morale", and decrease popular support (cf. also Shue 2011: 471), and toward audiences abroad to mobilize support and delegitimize support for the enemy.

building the force and operating it".[14] This shows how much the IDF cares about its image and how highly it assesses the strategic value of its image. Consequently, "Achieving legitimacy"[15] and "the ability to impact the shaping of perception in all the circles associated with the conflict"[16] also is defined by the leadership of IDF as a vital task and core competence of the Israeli military. Besides "intelligence, […] psychological warfare, diplomatic and political channels" the doctrine highlights thereby, in particular, the importance of "public relations, [and] professional information"[17], i.e., external communication, as methods to shape the perception of audiences abroad.

That a conflict party dedicates so much space and such a central role to the aspect of using pictures and stories strategically in a document describing its general military strategy shows how central and relevant the aspect has become for conflict parties in modern conflicts: For one, conflict parties acknowledge (unlike classical neorealist or rationalist theories might expect[18]) the high strategic relevance of pictures and stories. On the other hand, they engage in external communication to strategically use this power of pictures and stories to their advantage.

The rise of social media further increased possibilities and relevance for conflict parties to engage in external communication.

The rise of the mass media and especially the rise of social media of recent has further increased the possibilities and relevance for conflict parties to engage in external communication (cf. e.g. Samuel-Azran & Yarchi 2018): Whilst traditional forms of mass media such as television, radio and newspapers continue to play an important role and remain influential, in the recent years, social media has become a new arena with a more and more growing importance. Social media, moreover, offers conflict parties the advantage of being able to spread their messages without any editorial modifications of journalists and media-makers. Furthermore, social media is comparatively easy to access for conflict parties (cf. e.g. Kwon et al. 2012). Setting up and taking care of a Facebook page or a Twitter account is comparatively

14 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 5, paragraph no. 35.
15 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 5, unnumbered table "Core abilities required by the IDF".
16 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 5, paragraph no. 33.
17 IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 35.
18 Within the mainstream of the rationalist and realist traditions external communication so far typically either is conceptualized as "cheap talk" (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001: 402), as a mere appendix to power-political decisions or limited to aspects such as audience costs and a signaling function during bargaining. In general, communication is perceived in the rationalist and realist traditions typically as purely instrumental but not as additionally (possibly) constitutive and/or persuasive (Strong 2015: 6ff.).

cheap in comparison to the expenses needed for editing a newspaper or a television broadcast (Evans 2016: 334; Kuntsman & Stein 2010; Al-Monitor 13.10.2015[19]). Whilst aiming to theorize the external communication of conflict parties in general, therefore, considering their growing relevance, this study focuses in particular on the external communication of conflict parties in social media.

1.2 Research focus, research questions and core thesis

Pictures and stories of war make a difference. And pictures and stories can be used during conflicts strategically. Scholars from the fields of public diplomacy (e.g. Yarchi 2016; Mor 2006; Mor 2007) and related literatures such as digital diplomacy (e.g. Kretschmer 2017) or cultural diplomacy (e.g. Bu 1999) and, even earlier, scholars studying propaganda and persuasion started to explore the phenomenon of the strategic use of communication during conflicts. So far, besides the relevance of the topic, however, most contributions to this research are still mostly descriptive and anecdotal. In general, scholars of public diplomacy have been pointing out that their field still lacks theorization and comprehensive, systematic empirical studies (e.g. Entman 2008: 87; Gilboa 2008: 56; Fullerton 2016).[20] Similarly, while schol-

19 Cf. also Hanson 2013: chapter "Questioning the Media".

20 Considering that social media are still a comparatively young technology, even less research examining the use of social media for external communication during conflicts has been published than about the strategic use of external communication during conflicts in general. From the few contributions already existing so far on the use of social media during conflicts, many contributions focus on the innovative character of the new technology and its strategic and tactical implications. These contributions, however, so far mostly neglect to categorize the content of the social media messages used for external communication. Within the small number of contributions that looks also at the content of the communication in the social media during conflicts most contributions so far have a simple inductive design and are mostly descriptive. All the contributions focus only on single communication channels and events, such as the communication of the Israeli army and Hamas during the Gaza Wars in 2008/2009 (Ward 2009), in 2012 (Zeitzoff 2016; Zeitzoff 2013; Kruse 2013) and in 2014 (Orth 2017; Aouragh 2016 – both using a poststructuralist perspective; El Zein & Abusalem 2015), and the Flotilla incident (Allan & Brown 2010; Kruse 2013; Mor 2014). Other studies deal with (online) media efforts during the Second Intifada (Shai & Moskowitz 2018) and the Lebanon War in 2006 (Mor 2012; Mor 2012b). A study of Kohn (2015) examining the Instagram posts on the Instagram page of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) is a seldom example for a study examining posts from a stage of the conflict that is not a particularly intensive stage of the conflict. The study, however, examines only the posts from August until September 2013 (Kohn 2015: 198), i.e., only a rather short timeframe. Another example is a small study of Garnett who examined a small sample of 378 tweets from two months from the Twitter channel of the IDF (Garnett 2015). Furthermore, various studies about the communication of extremist groups have been published (especially about the communication of Islamist groups such as Daesh).

ars from conflict research have acknowledged the relevance of communication in the context of conflicts, so far from this perspective as well the important nexus between conflict and communication has yet to be explored in comprehensive studies.

This study, thus, aims to breach this gap by examining ***external communication***[21] during ***asymmetric conflicts*** systematically: Theoretical concepts for distinguishing communication strategies during conflicts are introduced, a theoretical model explaining the selection of communication strategies during asymmetric conflicts is developed and the model is tested systematically in a comprehensive empirical study. The study, this way, examines two research questions: (1) ***which strategies of external communication conflict parties use during asymmetric conflicts*** and (2) ***what shapes the selection of these communication strategies***. The examples of powerful pictures and stories from conflicts above have shown that not only one type of communication strategy can be chosen by conflict parties, but that conflict parties can choose from different types of content for their external communication. To understand how external communication is used during asymmetric conflicts, and how it can influence how audiences abroad perceive the conflict, it is first necessary to understand which strategies of external communication conflict parties use during asymmetric conflicts. The first research question addresses this open question. Moreover, in a second stage, it is important to understand the reasons for the corresponding selection of strategies of external communication. This open question is addressed in the second research question. To answer the question, the hypothesis is developed that ***the selection of strategies of external communication is determined by the structure of the conflict***.

Empirically both research questions were examined by studying the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine in social media as an exemplary case. For the study neither a „Pro-Palestinian" nor a „Pro-Israeli" normative perspective was adopted, instead a pacifist/humanitarian perspective was applied. The analysis does not aim to judge what is just, right or true, but instead endeavors to explore analytically the examined phenomenon and

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The communication of these extremist groups, however, are a very particular type of communication, as unlike ordinary conflict parties they tend to have a hostile attitude toward the Western mainstream, an attitude which influences also their external communication (cf. chapter A.1.2. "Detailed discussion of the categories of the definition of external communication" in the online annex).

21 The study focuses on the analysis of "external communication", which is understood as open and fully attributable unidirectional mass communication of an official organization representing a conflict party that is directed to a foreign audience, toward which the communicating actor has a friendly or at least neutral attitude, and in particular to so far unaffiliated civil population (cf. section 2.1.).

to ultimately formulate, as concluded from the research results, recommendations that can contribute to conflict resolution.

1.3 Overview – Thesis outline

In **chapter 2** the core concepts of this study, "external communication", "branding" (communication presenting oneself positively) and "shaming" (communication presenting the opponent negatively), are introduced. Thus, chapter 2 creates a typology of strategies of external communication.

In **chapter 3** theory of how the structure of asymmetric conflicts shapes the selection of strategies external communication is presented, arguing that the asymmetric distribution of capabilities shapes different interests of the different conflict parties (prioritization pathway), different opportunities to convince for the different conflict parties (audience pathway) and different opportunities to present for the different conflict parties (picturability pathway).

In **chapter 4**, then, the case selection (the conflict in Israel and Palestine) is explained and the research design and methodology used for the empirical research in this study are introduced: an innovative triangulative approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

In **chapter 5** the results of the first part of the empirical research are presented. It shows which strategies of external communication have been chosen by the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of the Israeli authorities is dominated by branding and the external communication of Hamas and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is dominated by shaming.

In **chapters 6, 7 and 8** the second part of the empirical research is presented. The chapters show how the selection of strategies of external communication by the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine is shaped by the structure of the conflict.

Chapter 6 shows that the asymmetric distribution of capabilities shape the various interests of the different conflict parties and how these varying interests, in turn, make the conflict parties choosing different strategies of external communication.

Chapter 7 shows that the asymmetric distribution of capabilities shapes different opportunities to convince and different opportunities to present for the different conflict parties. It is shown that the Palestinian side as the underdog has better opportunities to use shaming, whilst the Israeli side has better opportunities to use branding. Furthermore, it is shown that these divergent opportunities influence the selection strategies of external communication by the conflict parties:

The conflict parties pick predominantly those strategies of external communication for which they have the best opportunities to use them.

In **chapter 8**, then, the variation of strategies of external communication over time is explored and potential alternative explanations are tested and rejected.

In **chapter 9**, finally, the results of the research and its theoretical core contributions are summarized: The study contributes to both the research on asymmetric conflicts and on public diplomacy by providing a theoretical model for an important aspect for both fields, external communication during asymmetric conflicts. Furthermore, conclusions on the generalizability of the empirical research are drawn and proposals for future research are made, arguing that the theoretical model introduced in this study is also applicable to various other cases. Finally, moreover, recommendations for practitioners derived from the results of this study are presented.

2. Conceptualization

2.1 Conceptualizing "external communication"

Communication during conflicts happens in a variety of constellations. The numbers of actors and different forms of communication enable us to distinguish between different "communication contexts". This study focuses on a particular communication context: "external communication".[1]

Upon consulting the literatures about propaganda, persuasion, public diplomacy and other related literatures exploring communication in competitive and conflictive settings, the following characteristics can be identified as distinguishing the different communication contexts: (a) The type of the selected target audience, (b) the directionality of the communication, (c) the relationship of the target audience with the target audience, (d) the type of communicating actor, and (e) the

1 The communication constellation is a crucial scope condition that needs to be clearly determined and understood before acts of communication are compared. This study exclusively focuses on examining one particular communication constellation that shall be called "external communication". Distinguishing between different communication constellations, focusing on one particular type of communication constellation and defining what is meant when speaking about "external communication" as communication constellation is important, as different communication constellations have very different characteristics and qualities and, therefore, can provide very different conditions for communication: For analyzing what strategies of external communication conflict parties use during asymmetric conflicts, the first research question examined in this study, it is important to define what is understood as "external communication" to be able to make sure that for all analyzed actors the same type of communication, i.e., communication within the same communication constellation, is examined. Focusing on only one type of communication constellation allows keeping the influence of the communication constellation constant and thereby makes sure that the same forms of communication are examined for the different conflict parties. Furthermore, for examining what shapes the selection of communication strategies of the different conflict parties, the second research question of this study, keeping the type of communication constellation selected for the analysis constant and thereby avoiding varying conditions provided by unequal communication constellations matters, as these unequal conditions would constitute an interfering variable distorting the results.

Table 1: Understanding of external communication in this study

Feature of communication context	Manifestations of the communication context
Target audience	Foreign audience, particularly thus far unaffiliated civil population
Directionality	Unidirectional mass communication (one-to-many)
Relationship of the target audience with the target audience	Friendly, or at least neutral, attitude toward the Western world and the international community
Communicating actor	Official organizations representing the conflict parties
Attributability	Fully attributable (i.e., overt communication)

attributability of the communication. Using these characteristics, "external communication" shall thus be understood as open and fully attributable, unidirectional mass communication of an official organization representing a conflict party that is directed to a foreign audience, toward which the communicating actor has a friendly or at least neutral attitude, and in particular, to a so far unaffiliated civil population (cf. table 1). A detailed discussion of the different characteristics can be found in the chapter A.1.2. "Detailed discussion of the categories of the definition of 'external communication'" of the online annex.

2.2 Conceptualizations of strategies of external communication

Having introduced what shall be understood as external communication within the realm of this study, the next section introduces and conceptualizes the two most relevant strategies of external communication during conflicts.[2]

Within the existing literature referring to conflict and communication two strands of literature can be identified: One group highlights the effectiveness of external communication making negative attributions to the opponent ("shaming"), whilst another one highlights the importance of positive self-attributions ("branding"). The following section introduces both strategies, identifying their rhetorical structure by summarizing how the two strategies are defined within the state of research and discussing what makes them particularly promising

2 For purposes of linguistic simplicity, the term "strategy of external communication" shall refer to both a specific type of content used in a communicated message and a general tendency of an actor to use specific types of content in its external communication. To emphasize the former alternatively the term "tactic" could be used, to emphasize the latter the term "overall strategy".

strategies of external communication from the point of view of the two strands of theory. It shall also be evaluated which types of reference themes are particularly promising for the corresponding strategies of external communication. This thus develops a typology which is then used in chapter 5 to analyze what strategies of external communication conflict parties use. At the same time, the typology also serves as conceptualization for the dependent variable and their manifestations when answering the second research question of this study.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing "shaming"

A diverse group of authors, of which many are scholars dealing with research fields and concepts such as norm diffusion (e.g. Risse et al. 1999: 11, 15; Jetschke & Liese 2013: 26,29), naming and shaming (e.g. Krain 2012), blame-shifting (e.g. Mortensen 2012) and rhetorical action (e.g. Schimmelfennig 2001: 64), point out that the most prominent option for a conflict party to manipulate the image of the conflict (regardless of whether it is a private, a political or even a violent military conflict) of a third-party audience is to ascribe attitudes or behavior that are typically perceived by the targeted audience as negative to a rival actor. Actions like these are typically labeled as "shaming", respectively "naming and shaming" (in eponymous literature) or "blaming" (in the field of blame-shifting).

The rhetorical structure of shaming

Within the different literatures on shaming two core elements of the rhetorical structure of shaming[3] can be identified: On the one hand, a shaming message contains a description of a perceived negative experience, e.g. an experience of a loss or harm. On the other hand, an attribution of the negative experience to another actor is made. The negative experience is portrayed as avoidable or someone else's fault and another actor is depicted as responsible for either causing or failing to prevent this negative experience (i.e., the actor is depicted as a perpetrator, offender or culprit) (Mortensen 2012: 441f.; Hood 2011: 6; Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Hood 2005: 2; Iyengar 1989 & 1991). The element of identifying and recognizing an experience as injurious or harmful has partially also been separately labeled as "naming" (Hood 2011: 7; Felstiner et al. 1980: 635). While attributions can theoretically be undetermined or implicit, typically the (alleged) perpetrator is mentioned explicitly. Optionally, the (alleged) victim(s) can also be described.

The following two social media posts are examples of typical shaming posts:

3 Respectively of "naming and shaming" or "blaming". For purposes of linguistic simplicity, in this study from now on the term "shaming" is used to refer to negative descriptions of opponents.

1. A post published by the Rojava Defense Units on their English Twitter channel on the 14th of March 2018 (*accessible online: https://twitter.com/DefenseUnits/status/974033581914968064, source accessed on: 23.04.2018*) shows a series of four pictures portraying wounded children, partially with blood on their faces. The caption of the post reads: "Turkish artillery and airstrikes once again attacking civilians and children. #TwitterKurds #TurkeyHandsOffAfrin #TurkeyKillsCivilians #StopAfrinGenocide #Afrin #Efrînê". The post contains the typical elements of the rhetorical structure of a shaming post: The children are portrayed as victims and the post deems Turkey as the perpetrator. The negative experience for which Turkey is shamed is the country's violent aggressions and the hurt afflicted to the children and civilians.
2. A post published by the Syrian National Council on their English Facebook page on the 19th of April 2018 (*accessible online: https://www.facebook.com/SyrianNationalCoalition.en/photos/a.437287806357010.1073741828.436337196452071/1680600082025770/?type=3&theater, source accessed on: 25.04.2018*) shows destructed buildings and a military vehicle with a Russian flag. The caption of the post reads: "#Assad Regime & #Russia Blocking Entry of #UN CW Experts to Site of Chemical Attack in #Douma https://buff.ly/2JYlsSm #Syria #OPCW". Like the post of the Rojava Defense Units described before also this post contains the typical elements of the rhetorical structure of a shaming post: The Syrian government (labeled as "Assad Regime") is portrayed as a perpetrator. It is accused by the authors of the post of actioning attacks with chemical weapons and blocking access for international controllers. Russia is referred to as a perpetrator in this instance, too. A specific victim or group of victims is not mentioned. Additionally, the picture shows destroyed buildings as a further negative experience.

The rationale of shaming

The rationale of shaming is to damage the image of the opponent (Krain 2012: 574) and/or to shift blame away from oneself (Mortensen 2012). Successful shaming manages to present its accusations credibly for either the decision-makers in the targeted third-party country, for the civil society and the public of the targeted country (or at least certain influential and/or powerful constituencies) or even for both. In any case, damaging the image of the shamed actor can trigger actions that are detrimental to the shamed one. Altogether, shaming can be effective in the following ways:

1. Firstly, the shamed actor might be persuaded by the shaming message that its own behavior has been wrong and thus adapt the desired behavior.

2. Moreover, decision-makers abroad might believe the accusations and the image portrayed of the conflict party and the conflict itself. These images may be what influence decision-makers abroad regarding whether or not to intervene in the conflict, how to do so. This can also lead to decision-makers abroad considering whether or not they should cooperate with the conflict parties, and how to do so. This could ultimately lead to changes to the detriment of the shamed actor.
3. Furthermore, the accusations of the shaming message might not be believed by the decision-makers of a targeted third-party country, even then, however, the decision-makers abroad can exploit the accusations as an argument to justify an intervention against the conflict party that reflects their own interests.
4. Finally, the shaming message may be used as a means to build up moral and public pressure on foreign decision-makers by rhetorical entrapment, convincing and mobilizing relevant constituencies within the public and civil society of the targeted third-party country.

While the first of the four aforementioned options in practice is surely the least likely effect of shaming and the fourth option the most likely to be put into effect, all these effects can theoretically result from shaming. The following paragraphs introduce the corresponding rationale and functioning of shaming in further detail:

The first (though least likely) way shaming can be effective is that it might persuade the actor accused in the act of shaming. Indeed, Hood points out that it is a normal psychological trait that humans want to be well thought of (Hood 2011: 7). The shamed actor might be hurt emotionally by the shaming, as the image of the actor presented in the shaming diverges from its self-image. Indeed, Gränzer and Risse et al. offer an empirical example for such a case, arguing that when Morocco was accused of its human rights violations in the 1980s, the shaming which came in the course of international protests against these violations persuaded Hassan II, the king of Morocco, that the political practice in the country concerning human rights was not consistent with the identity to which he aspired and, ultimately resulted in a change to Moroccan political practices (Risse et al. 1999: 15; Gränzer 1999: 125; cf. also Gränzer et al. 1998).

Although the accusations of a shaming message can, theoretically, directly persuade a conflict party of its misbehavior (Risse et al. 1999: 15; Gränzer 1999: 125; cf. also Gränzer et al. 1998), the effectiveness of the shaming typically results from the damaging of the shamed actor's image caused by shaming. Shaming creates an external pressure on the shamed actor: Being perceived in a negative way harms the reputation of an actor within the eyes of relevant political third-party actors as well as within the international community as a whole (Krain 2012: 574, 575, 577). Such a reputational loss affects the shamed actor, as when the image of the conflict abroad is used to make strategic foreign political decisions, the corresponding

decisions are less likely to be favorable for the conflict party, if its image has been damaged by shaming. For example, a loss of reputation can decrease the likelihood that other actors, potential partners and donors will maintain or initiate cooperation with the shamed actor, making it more difficult for other actors to justify supporting the shamed actor (Krain 2012: 575). If it is particularly successful, shaming can even trigger third party actors to impose sanctions on the shamed actor or to intervene against them (Badescu 2010: 158).

Shaming does not even need to persuade the decision-makers abroad that see or hear the shaming to be successful. Shaming can also be harmful to the shamed actor, if it is exploited by third-party actors that do not necessarily believe the accusations in the shaming messages, but that have interests in the conflict region which, however, diverge from the interests of the shamed conflict party, as the content of the shaming messages can provide arguments which can be used to justify an intervention against the accused actor. Some authors have pointed out, for example, that human rights shaming can also be used (directly or indirectly) as a justification for measures motivated by other interests. For instance, measures in the context of the "war on terror" like the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s were not only justified with security-related concerns such as the possession of mass destruction weapons and terrorism but partially also with accusations of human rights violations (Montgomery 2006: 90; Terman 2013; Cushman 2005: 93). On the one hand, shaming messages can be used to illustrate the need for military measures abroad, thus decreasing domestic opposition to such measures (Evans 2009: 24ff.). On the other hand, shaming can serve in the context of international law as an argument as to why certain extraordinary measures such as a military intervention are necessary, even though such an intervention violates fundamental principles of the international law such as the sovereignty of state and the non-intervention principle (Cushman 2005: 93).

Successful shaming, however, neither requires convincing the decision-makers in the targeted third-party country themselves nor evoking their interest to intervene. It is sufficient, if the shaming communication manages to build up public and/or moral pressure onto them to react (Dietrich & Murdie 2015: 2), e.g. by ceasing support or imposing sanctions. Often, indeed, for example, economic ties and interests, as well as the high costs of intervention, or a lack of information about the ongoing events make the decision-makers in third-party actors hesitate to intervene in the conflict, even when fundamental principles, norms and values such as the protection of human rights are violated in the conflict. In this case, however, the suffering side in the conflict can use – supported by international human rights networks and international media reporting – shaming to raise awareness about the violations and their negative consequences. The pictures of the negative experience have the potential to generate outrage among viewers in the country in which the shaming message is viewed. If the shaming messages succeed to prompt

such strong emotions and if it is possible to reach out to a wide audience, this can create a public pressure that, if big enough, has the potential to pressurize the government in the corresponding country to the extent that it has to intervene (Hildebrandt et al. 2013; cf. also Risse et al. 1999: 20). Additionally, a particularly efficient form of moral pressure can be built up by the use of shaming, if it manages to create a situation of rhetorical entrapment by exposing inconsistencies between the commitments and declarations made by the pressured actors in the past and their current behavior, as this makes it easy to remind them of their commitment to certain values, ideas and norms which the actors perceive as important and relevant (or at least useful) and which they, therefore, do not want to be discredited (Schimmelfennig 2001: 64, 66; Risse et al. 1999: 16,28; Risse 2000: 23,32[4]). A prominent empirical example of a case in which a shaming strategy managed to induce governments to impose sanctions on a shamed actor are the shaming and lobbying activities of the Anti-Apartheid movement. The movement managed to raise world-wide attention for the human rights violations of the South African government and could thus build up moral and public pressure to impose a series of sanctions on the regime and to insulate it internationally (Risse & Ropp 1999: 268).

Reference themes that are particularly promising for the use of shaming

Shaming is particularly successful, if it can stimulate emotions such as outrage or concerns within the targeted audience. The best way to stimulate such strong emotions is to feature something that is perceived by the targeted audience from the perspective of its norms, ideas and values as particularly despicable and that can be presented clearly as the direct fault of the shamed actor, i.e., to feature a defiance of the shamed actor from one or more notions (norms, ideas or values)[5] that are perceived by the targeted audience as particularly important and relevant, portraying the negative consequences of these (alleged) violations (Woods 2009: 16f.).[6]

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4 Cf. also Katzenstein 2013. Katzenstein's considerations also show that an interactive communication constellation as context offers different options than a unidirectional communication constellation as context, like it is the focus of this study. Therefore, as argued already in section 2.1., it is important to keep the communication constellation as context constant within the analysis.

5 Researchers from communication science and sociology examining the news value of media items such as, for instance, Niklas Luhmann have identified conflict (Luhmann 1996: 59) and breaches of norms ("scandals") (Luhmann 1996: 64ff.) as themes that are particularly promising to attract attention and that are perceived as particularly newsworthy, too.

6 Scholars of the field of norm diffusion highlight that shaming contributes to consciousness-raising abroad. States and actors credibly accused of defying from notions that are perceived by the targeted audience as particularly important and relevant (such as, for instance, human rights) are at risk to be perceived by the convinced audience as "pariah states" or "terrorists" not belonging to the civilized international community. This way shaming has the potential

Corresponding pictures and stories that are particularly promising for shaming are either pictures and stories representing particularly extreme acts of physical violence[7] and/or pictures and stories representing structural violence and disadvantages that are perceived as injustices. Both can trigger emotions such as shock, empathy and outrage and typically portray a subject that is or is linked to a violation (or at least an alleged violation) of human rights, a norm group which is globally perceived to be particularly fundamental and important.[8]

As the following example illustrates not all acts of violence can, however, be expected to be equally effective reference themes for shaming:[9] A border shooting between combatants leaving one of the combatants wounded for example is less likely to cause an outcry than a bombing of a hospital causing a high number of civilian casualties. Shaming can be expected to be most successful, if it refers to breaches of norms that are perceived as particularly extreme and/or immoral. As also the example above illustrates violence is perceived as particularly extreme, when it fulfills the following characteristics:

1. The damage is large scale, and the number of human casualties is particularly high (cf. also Clarke et al. 2015: 25ff.). Corresponding quantifications can help to illustrate the extent and therefore how severe the (alleged) norm violation is.
2. The action causing the damage and casualties is clearly attributable to the opponent conflict party. A clear "perpetrator" is thus determined, and no doubt is left about the question of guilt.

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to construct a strong distinction between "us" and "them", respectively in-groups and outgroups (Risse et al. 1999: 15).

7 Psychologists, media researchers and practitioners have observed an "if it bleeds it leads" bias, i.e., that violence receives particularly much attention in the media coverage (cf. e.g. Miller & Bokemper 2016: 10,13; Miller & Albert 2015; Schradie 2017).

8 Human rights are an attractive reference notion, as references to human rights are omnipresent in the daily political language and they are claimed to be a fundamental principle of the current international community of states. The violent context of wars offers plenty of opportunities to claim and show real or alleged violations of fundamental human rights and often also of the humanitarian law, such as violence against civilians, and to portray opponents with negative connotations, e.g. as "perpetrators", "evil", "terrorists" or "traitors" (Jetschke & Liese 2013: 41; Risse 2000: 29; Laursen 2000: 444; Prakash 2007). Secessionist forces also can refer to another generation of human rights, the notion of a right of self-determination of peoples, which emerged as part of the third generation of human rights, and condemn "occupation" and "aggression" (cf. e.g. Hartnett 2013).

9 This matters for communicating actors, as opportunities for allegations of norm breaches and reports about norm breaches are common and frequent. Headlines about violence and war for example are nearly every day in the news. To stand out from the crowd communicating actors, therefore, need to select pictures and stories which are not only promising but as promising as possible.

3. The victims belong to a group that is typically perceived as particularly vulnerable (cf. also Münkler 2005: 90). Violence against victims that are perceived as innocent and particularly helpless, such as "refugees, crying women and desperately resisting children" (Münkler 2005: 90), is typically perceived as particularly immoral and is typically condemned more vehemently and strongly than violence against soldiers and other combatants. This conventional wisdom is also manifested in the principles of humanitarian law, granting special protection to civilians and particularly vulnerable individuals, while accepting violence against ordinary combatants.

2.2.2. Conceptualizing "branding"

Altogether, the explanations above show that shaming is a highly attractive and powerful strategy of external communication. Reflecting upon the common use of external communication, mass media and social media, however, raises the question of whether shaming is indeed the only existing strategy of external communication that has the potential to be helpful for conflict parties. Looking at the private use of social media or at practices of marketing, it can be observed that this communication is dominated more by positive self-representation and promotion rather than by shaming. Considering their success in marketing and in everyday media and social media communication, such tactics focusing on positive communication could be a second particularly promising strategy for the external communication of conflict parties.

Indeed, several fields and concepts such as (nation) branding (e.g. Dinnie 2016), soft power (e.g. Nye 2008; Nye 2009; Nye 1990: 168ff.; Melissen 2005), cultural diplomacy (e.g. Arndt 2005) and sports diplomacy (e.g. Murray 2012) as well as public diplomacy (e.g. Gilboa 2001) show that actors cannot merely just influence how they and the context in which they operate are perceived abroad by shaming their opponents – they can also use more positive forms of communication and focus on improving their own image abroad: The theories of nation branding parallel ideas from marketing and emphasize the importance of countries defining their "brand". Similarly, the concept of soft power emphasizes the power and political implications of cultural attractiveness (Nye 2008). While public diplomacy and cultural and sports diplomacy are not limited by their definition to positive communication, most contributions from the corresponding fields predominantly deal with activities based on positive forms of communication and show how foreign decision-making can be influenced indirectly by building up relationships with foreign civil societies and individuals and influencing their opinions. I propose to define such acts of communication in which an actor depicts themselves in a positive way as a strategy of "branding".

The rhetorical structure of branding

Analogous to shaming the rhetorical structure of branding has two core elements which can be defined identified as follows: On the one hand, a branding message contains a reference to a subject that is assumed by the communicating actor to be perceived by the targeted audience as positive. On the other hand, branding also requires an attribution; it needs to name an actor to which the positive experience shall be attributed to. In the case of branding the communicating actor depicts itself, someone or something related to itself as the target of the attribution and thereby claims the positive experience for itself (Hood 2011: 9).[10] This means that structurally branding is the opposite of shaming, as it is concerned with the target of the attribution ("self" not "other") as well as the ascribed value of the described experience ("positive" instead of "negative").

Table 2: Comparison of the rhetorical structures of „shaming" vs. "branding"

Type of communication strategy	**Shaming**	**Branding**
Characteristic	**Attributes of characteristic**	
Ascribed value	Negative	Positive
Target of attribution	Other	Self

The following two social media posts are good examples of typical branding posts:

1. A post published on the English-speaking public diplomacy channel of the Republic of Turkey on Twitter (now: Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of Communications, earlier Republic of Turkey Office of the Prime Minister Directorate General of Press and Information) on the 14th of October 2016 (*accessible online: https://twitter.com/ByegmENG/status/821289050875129856/, source accessed on: 25.04.2018*) shows a solar power plant with plenty of solar panels, a blue, sunny sky and a green tree. The caption of the post reads: "Alternative #energy upturns in #Turkey in 2016 Rising figures: – 230% #solar – 31,5% #geothermal – 27,5% #windenergy http://byegm.gov.tr/english/agenda/solar-e

10 Hood does not use the term "branding" but the term "credit claiming". The definition of "branding" can be built up parallelly to Hood's most basic definition of "credit claiming".

nergy-in-turkey-shines-out-in-2016/104621 …". The post contains the typical elements of the rhetorical structure of a branding post: The Turkish government promotes itself by showing its efforts for renewable energy. This is an action that is typically perceived as positive by the international community, as these actions align with the notion of sustainability, a reference notion that is shared as a common value within the international community. The hashtag "#Turkey" attributes the merits clearly to the Turkish government.

2. A video published by the Syrian Ministry of Tourism on their English-speaking YouTube channel on the 30th of August 2016 (*accessible online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saXH4yQARqg, source accessed on: 25.04.2018*) promotes tourism in Latika. Like the post of the Turkish Government described before, also this post contains the typical elements of the rhetorical structure of a branding post: In the video cultural attractiveness, natural beauty and touristic value have been selected as a positive experience which is instrumentalized for depicting the Syrian government in a positive light: The video from 2016 shows the sunny beaches of Latakia with jet skis driving over the blue sea and party music as background music.

The rationale of branding

Like the rhetorical structure, the rationale of branding can be described as parallel but reverse to the rationale of shaming: While shaming is a good tool to harm the relationships of opponents with the international community and third-party actors, branding is a good tool to maintain or improve existing relationships or even to build up new relationships with the international community or specific third-party actors. To do so the communicating actors convince decision-makers abroad of their positive qualities either directly or indirectly by winning the support of public opinion of the targeted country (or the power politically relevant parts of it) and in this way creating pressure on the decision-makers to adapt their positions toward the communicating actors in a positive way. If successful, the communicating actors can profit from branding in two ways:

1. On the one hand, branding can motivate the target audience to support the communicating actor (and to refrain from negative interventions).
2. On the other hand, with branding communicating actors provide arguments to existing supporters abroad to justify their support for the communicating actor.

Branding can motivate the target audience to support the communicating actor: If the communicating actor manages to successfully present itself credibly in a positive way, its reputation increases. Positive attributes gained by branding, such as

being a "nice", "reliable", "fair", "appropriately acting", "trustworthy "or "attractive" actor form a positive (or, at least, an improved) image of the actor. This image, in turn, influences how foreign actors react to the conflict itself as well as toward the conflict parties involved. Practically, this matters for the communicating conflict party, as a good image, positive emotions (such as sympathy) and strong relationships make it more likely to receive support and less likely to be sanctioned (Gilboa 2001: 5; van Ham 2003: 429). This social effect of branding is to a certain extent similar to a company that creates an advertisement in order to increase the likelihood of selling one of its products. It is not a coincidence that fields such as "public diplomacy" or "nation branding" lend a lot of their terminology and ideas from research and practitioners of the field of marketing. Similar to commercial advertisement branding can appeal to the interests and/or the needs of targeted viewers to make its branding message particularly efficient. This way the conflict party can present itself as an attractive partner from which the targeted audience can also profit, e.g. in fields such as trade, technology, culture, tourism or security.

Moreover, branding provides the communicating actors with arguments to existing supporters abroad to justify their support for the communicating actor: Like shaming can provide arguments for third-party actors with divergent interests to intervene in the conflict branding can provide arguments for third-party actors that are already supportive toward the communicating conflict party. This helps them to justify why they defend their allies and do not intervene against them or resume their support to them. The messages can be used as "evidence" that the actor is e.g. a "role model for democracy", a "reliable partner" or a "legitimate, elected government enjoying the support of the people", even if it deviates from other fundamental notions.

Reference themes that are particularly promising for the use of branding

There is a large variety of possible reference notions and themes conflict parties can use for this purpose. To promote themselves, conflict parties e.g. can highlight their strong military capacities or their military victories (cf. also chapter 1).[11] The actors, however, can also choose not to refer to conflict at all and instead use their soft power: referring to appealing not conflict-related reference notions and subjects, especially to fields that are not typically primarily associated with political interests but that provide positive publicity for the country or entity using it, such

11 Showcasing one's victory has been popular through the ages. In former times victories e.g. were staged in the form of victory parades or by constructing triumph arches (Zaho 2004). Some images like the photo "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima", depicting a key US victory against the World War II Japan, have become iconic (TIME Magazine 01.11.2016b). Especially in modern asymmetric conflicts the conflict parties often contest for being perceived as the victorious conflict party (cf. also Toledano 2010: 589f. on the example of the 2006 Lebanon War).

as culture (Dinnie 2016: 120 ff.) and sports for example. Scholars examining cultural and sports diplomacy e.g. have described the Chinese panda diplomacy as a prominent example for such a strategy (Xing 2010; Zhang 2007; Hartig 2013) (often accusing that these strategies are used for distracting from human rights violations and democratic deficits by the use of nice words, symbols and gestures).[12] Besides culture, arts and tradition (Nye 2008: 94, 96) and sports other internationally popular reference notions that can be used for branding include, for example, "shared values" such as equality, diversity and democracy (Nye 2008: 94), contributions to humanitarian and development aid, international cooperation and responsibility (Tüney 2016; Karadag 2016; Vail 2018), economic attractiveness, scientific achievements and technological innovation (Krasnyak 2018).

Again, similar to the case of shaming, branding is particularly efficient, if it connects its branding message to a reference notion or theme that is perceived by the targeted audience as particularly important and relevant or interesting. This way the likelihood increases that the message will attract the attention of the targeted audience and that it cares about it. While the conflict research literature has, to date, not yet focused on discussing what corresponding reference notions or themes might be, within communication science and marketing research scholars have identified particularly promising reference themes and notions. According to this literature, the corresponding types of pictures and stories can be expected to be particularly promising for branding:

1. The pictures or stories which feature something that makes it easy for the target audience to identify with the communicating actor (Percy & Rossiter 1992: 271; cf. also Galtung & Ruge 1965: 81 ff.; Luhmann 1996: 60f.; the concept of "brand personality" in marketing research, e.g. Aaker 1997).
2. The pictures or stories credibly signal to the target audience a significant potential benefit for themselves (cf. also the basic concept of "profit motive" in economic studies, e.g. Lux 2003). When presenting the economic attractiveness of a country, for example, it is beneficial for the prospects of success of the branding, if a possible economic cooperation can be depicted as particularly profitable.
3. And/Or, the pictures or stories feature something that stands out from the average and is particularly prestigious or is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative (cf. also Schultz 2007: 191ff.; e.g. Luhmann 1996: 58f.; Galtung & Ruge 1965: 82f.): In sports, for example, a thirtieth place at the Olympics

12 Partially also (alleged) contributions to (international) security or "counter-terrorism" are highlighted. This argumentation allows actors to frame themselves as important, valuable, stable strategic partners and at the same time can serve as a justification for their own use of violence.

is less likely to impress than a gold medal. For reports about the international cooperation of a state it is beneficial, if official pictures with particularly important and popular people can be shown. For reports about aid and development support donated by a country it is beneficial, if the support can be presented as particularly generous and selfless. Reports about scientific innovations will be particularly attractive when the audience perceives them as useful for their own daily lives or to be particularly spectacular or surprising.

3. Theory – Explaining the selection of strategies of external communication

The introductions of shaming and branding in the conceptualization chapter (chapter 2) show that both have the potential to be powerful strategies of external communication. This makes both of them attractive communication strategies for conflict parties. In having two possibly attractive communication strategies, the following questions arise:

1. Which of the two strategies do conflict parties choose for their external communication?
2. What shapes the selection of the strategies of external communication of conflict parties?

To answer these interlinked research questions theoretically, this chapter first summarizes the theoretical expectations that can be derived from established theories on positive and negative communication (section 3.1.). After discussing, why the expectations that can be derived from the established theories are problematic for predicting the selection of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts, a new theoretical argument is introduced (sections 3.2. through to 3.5.2.): The asymmetric conflict structure, or more specifically the asymmetric distribution of power capabilities, influences the selection of the conflict parties' external communication strategies. Those conflict parties which are more powerful choose branding, those which are less powerful choose shaming. Finally, potential alternative explanations are discussed (section 3.5.3.).

3.1 Theoretical expectations of established theories

So far comprehensive research discussing the two research questions formulated above has not yet considered the scope of violent conflicts. However, some theories with a different or more general scope, that also deal with communication, have

formulated some expectations for the use of shaming and branding (respectively related concepts):

3.1.1 Expectations of the literature on blaming and credit claiming – The negativity bias

The literature on blaming and credit claiming proposes the assumption of a "negativity bias". Psychological studies and experiences from daily life have been used by those scholars to demonstrate that humans tend to pay more attention to negative than to positive communication (Hood 2011: 9ff.; Weaver 1986: 373). An equivalent tendency has also been observed for the selection of news by the press. Negative stories are selected more frequently by the press as news to report about, as they tend to be seen as more "newsworthy" (e.g. Soroka 2012; Altheide 1997; Harrington 1989; Patterson 1994; Moy & Pfau 2000; Shoemaker et al. 1987: 348; Soroka 2006;[1] Hood 2011: 10f.). Following the logic of the negativity bias, it should be expected that shaming can attract more attention than branding. Therefore, shaming should be the more attractive strategy of external communication for all conflict parties and it should be expected that they will predominantly select shaming as their strategy of external communication.

3.1.2 Expectations of marketing research – The positivity of marketing culture

In contrast, however, it is apparent that other fields are dominated by positive communication rather than by negative communication. Marketing, for example, tends to be dominated by positive communication, predominantly using advertisements to focus on one's own product in a positive light, negative advertisements are much rarer. These observations fit to findings from marketing research. Marketing researchers have shown in comprehensive empirical studies that advertisements evoking positive, pleasant feelings of the consumer are more successful in building up a more favorable brand attitude toward the advertised product (i.e., a stronger and more positive perception of the product) (Pham et al. 2013: 383). Similarly, in the private use of social media platforms positive content (like e.g. funny memes, pictures of food, traveling and pets) tends to be prevalent (Hu et al. 2014).[2]

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1 Soroka (2012 & 2006) and Harrington (1989: 37) show, using the example of economic news, that negative messages are much more likely to be selected by newsmakers than positive ones. Similarly, Patterson (1994: e.g. 7, 204) and Moy & Pfau (2000: 113) point out the dominant role of negativity in political news. Altheide (1997) points out a focus of media on fear and problems.

2 Cf. also e.g. a study of the content marketing agency FRACTL (FRACTL 2016) and articles on marketing blogs such as Jaredic 02.09.2014 and Kissmetrics 2014.

Whilst social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram can be also used for bullying or sharing negative political advertisement, the private use of these platforms is still mostly used for positive self-representation. From the point of view of the observations and findings listed in this paragraph, it should be expected that branding should be the most attractive strategy of external communication for all conflict parties and all conflict parties are most likely to adopt branding as their strategy of external communication.

3.2 The conflict structure as explanation for the selection of strategies of external communication

3.2.1 The limitations of the established theories

As shown in the previous sections, the theoretical expectations for predicting the selection of strategies of external communication of the established theories are conflictive: While authors from the field of blaming and credit claiming assume a negativity bias and, therefore, a predominance of shaming should be expected, authors from marketing research expect a prevalence of positivity and, therefore, a predominance of branding in the external communication of conflict parties is to be expected. Indeed, I argue that none of the established theories can adequately predict and explain which strategies of external communication conflict parties select during armed (asymmetric) conflicts.

Instead, I argue, the structure of the conflict needs to be considered as the key element of the explanation when trying to predict which strategies of external communication conflict parties choose for their external communication and when explaining what shapes the selection of these communication strategies during (asymmetric) conflicts.[3] The structure of the conflict fundamentally influences the selection of strategies of external communication during armed conflicts, as it

3 Violent conflicts are highly complex social phenomena. Besides the constellation of power relations constituted by the asymmetric distribution of capabilities also other factors such as culture and ideologies, geography and the history of the conflict can influence the behavior conflict parties (Pfanner 2005: 151). In general, the complexity of the conflict leaves the actors a margin of appreciation and interpretation (cf. the idea of the relative autonomy of representations of Bourdieu introduced before and also the thoughts of Katzenstein & Seybert 2018 on complexity; Gallo & Marzano 2009: 1). Still, the asymmetric power constellation of asymmetric conflicts has been pointed out by scholars to have a particularly strong influence on shaping the behavior of conflict parties in this type of conflict and a series of typical behaviors of underdogs and topdogs have been identified in the corresponding literature. In this study from these behaviors those are described that have an impact on the selection of strategies of external communication by the conflict parties. The corresponding accounts can be understood as ideal-typical descriptions of characteristics of the behavior of conflict

shapes both the interests of the conflict parties and their opportunities to use particular strategies of external communication successfully (i.e., that the conveyed message related to the communication strategy is accepted by the audience as credible and that, therefore, the external communication of the communicating conflict party acquires the potential to shift the perception of the target audience in favor of the communicating conflict party and ideally going so far as to even trigger reactions of the target audience in favor of the communicating conflict party). Strategically thinking actors can be expected to select their strategies of external communication based on these interests and opportunities. On the one hand, the expectable success of external communication is influenced by the "opportunities to convince" of the conflict parties, i.e., by how they and their position in the conflict are perceived by the audiences. On the other hand, success is also influenced by the conflict parties' "opportunities to present", i.e., their ability to present particular pictures and stories.

3.2.2 Asymmetric conflicts

In particular for the external communication of conflict parties involved in asymmetric conflicts, I expect a selection of strategies of external communication varying strongly from what has been predicted by all of the established theories presented earlier. I expect that due to the asymmetric conflict structure and the interests and opportunities shaped by this structure the selection will vary across the different conflict parties: I expect the external communication of powerful actors to be dominated by branding and the external communication of less powerful actors to be dominated by shaming.

In the following sections, I briefly define asymmetric conflicts and introduce the relevant literatures for theorizing the influence of the asymmetric conflict structure on the selection of strategies of external communication of the conflict parties (section 3.2.2.1.). Then the independent variable of this study, the (asymmetric) distribution of power capabilities representing the conflict structure, is introduced and conceptualized (section 3.2.2.2.). Finally, a first brief outline of the three pathways connecting the independent variable (the structure of the conflict) and the dependent variable (the selection of strategies of external communication) is presented (section 3.2.2.3.).

3.2.2.1 Defining asymmetric conflicts and state of the research

An ***"asymmetric conflict"*** can be characterized as a violent, armed conflict in which very unequal opponents are opposing each other: A far more powerful *"topdog"* is

parties in asymmetric conflicts that are shared across different asymmetric conflicts at least partially.

confronted by one or more far less powerful *"underdog(s)"*. Since World War II this type of conflict structure has become the predominant type of conflict structure (Daase 1999: 12).[4] For this reason, this study also focuses on theorizing and analyzing the selection of strategies of external communication for this type of conflict.

The asymmetric distribution of power *capabilities* amongst the different conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts shapes the different interests of the different types of conflict parties and thus creates different opportunities for their external communication. It, therefore, determines which communication strategies are promising and which are then selected by the strategically thinking conflict parties for this reason. Bringing together two strands of literature helps to identify and describe the interests and opportunities that are typical for asymmetric conflicts and how they emerge and influence the selection of strategies of external communication: The classical (mostly rationalist) research on asymmetric conflicts and literature about how audiences tend to perceive conflicts and events that are related to the conflict and the conflict parties (in a not necessarily purely "rational" way).

Being the most common type of conflict, asymmetric conflicts have attracted the attention of various scholars that have been trying to understand the dynamics of this type of conflict. The ***literature on asymmetric conflicts*** has identified the strongly asymmetric distribution of power capabilities as a key characteristic of the asymmetric conflict structure. Assuming that the conflict parties are acting strategically, the literature shows how this variable shapes the *interests* of the conflict parties. Furthermore, the literature shows how the unequal distribution makes the conflict parties select different military, economic and political strategies to adapt as well as they can to the conditions constituted by the conflict structure. That the actions of the conflict parties and their observable consequences vary, in turn, matters for the selection of strategies of external communication, as this creates different *opportunities to present* pictures and stories for the different actors.

Besides the strategic actions and considerations of the conflict parties how the audience of the external communication tends to perceive conflicts and conflict-related events also matters for which *opportunities* the conflict parties have *to convince* their audience with their external communication. Unlike the conflict parties, which are dedicated to the conflict and their external communication professionally, the reactions of the audience can be expected to be not necessarily shaped by

4 In the perception of the Western world this shift might have been overshadowed partially by the Cold War between the two blocs led by the superpowers USA and Soviet Union (even despite the guerilla wars in Korea 1950-1953, Vietnam 1955-1975 and Afghanistan 1979-1989), but after the end of the Cold War and especially after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq this change in the environment of the international system has been widely recognized in the West (Cf. also Daase 1999: 12).

strategic considerations but by preexisting conceptions, preferences and habits. To describe these opportunities, I, therefore, draw additionally on ***literature from cognitive research*** describing how audiences tend to react to competitive asymmetric constellations. Furthermore, communication and marketing research can also offer insights into what kinds of subjects of pictures and stories tend to be perceived as particularly harmful or attractive.

3.2.2.2 The asymmetric distribution of power capabilities in asymmetric conflicts

The most basic feature of the structure of asymmetric conflicts (and at the same time the most predominant characteristic), as the literature on asymmetric conflicts points out, is that in asymmetric conflicts resources, abilities and potentials ("capabilities") are distributed extremely unequally among the different conflict parties. The distribution of capabilities shapes the interests and opportunities of the different conflict parties and, for this reason, influences the selection of strategies of external communication of the conflict parties. Therefore, the following section describes the ideal-typical distribution of capabilities in asymmetric conflicts, as it has been described by scholars studying asymmetric conflicts: In total, scholars studying asymmetric conflicts have emphasized three different forms of capabilities to be particularly relevant for determining the power relations among the actors and, therefore, the conflict setting: Military capabilities, economic & financial capabilities and social/institutional capabilities.

Military capabilities: The most commonly used feature to characterize the structure of asymmetric conflicts is the distribution of military capabilities, i.e., resources, abilities and potentials (Stepanova 2008: 14f.) to use physical force (Villumsen Berling 2015: 49) in order to exert power over other actors. According to this understanding, asymmetric conflicts can be defined as conflicts that are fought between actors with uneven military resources, abilities and potentials: One "topdog", that is by far superior in terms of its capacities for conventional warfare, is fighting against one (or more) "underdog(s)", that is/are by far inferior in regards to its/their capacities for conventional warfare. In a conventional[5] combat setting having many more troops and sophisticated military equipment with high firepower, i.e., a lot of military capabilities, gives the topdog a clear advantage. The underdog, in contrast, has hardly any chance of not suffering a crushing defeat (cf. e.g. Geiß 2006: 762; Daase 1999: 96). The conventional military strength gives the strong actor a clear advantage in a conventional combat setting, and often is measured in terms of "manpower", i.e., the military personal that is

5 Conventional warfare, thereby, refers to combat in an open, direct confrontation between the forces of the conflict parties, a form of warfare that was typical for the end of the 18th century and partially for the 19th and 20th century (Bernard 2015: 960; Daase 1999: 12).

available for an actor (Arreguín-Toft 2001: 96; Paul 1994: 22). Some authors also include the general population size, as a rough indicator for measuring the potential for recruitments (Arreguín-Toft 2001: 96; Paul 1994: 22). Furthermore, some authors stress the importance of the availability of military equipment (Paul 1994: 22; Stepanova 2008: 18). Besides quantitative indicators the quality of the military personnel and equipment are stressed by some authors as being important for assessing the military strength of an actor (Paul 1994: 22; Stepanova 2008: 18f.). Some authors stress the importance of military technological know-how (Paul 1994: 22; Stepanova 2008: 15,18; Sudhir 2008: 59; Arasli 2011: 5), administrative and coordinative abilities (Paul 1994: 22) and training and combat skills of the troops, for example. All of these qualities give actors the ability to operate successfully in a conventional combat setting. Some authors, furthermore, point out that to have an impact on the other actors, weapons and troops do not even have to be actively used. Sometimes when the presence of the weapons and troops is noticed by an opponent actor, the observing actor is likely to adapt its behavior based on the prior assessment and experience of what potential to affect it these weapons and troops could, or would, have (Villumsen Berling 2015: 49).

Economic & financial capabilities: While most scholars studying asymmetric warfare agree that the distribution of military capabilities is a central feature for understanding the particular structure of asymmetric conflicts, many scholars emphasize that it is not the only important form of capabilities shaping the structure of asymmetric conflicts. A series of scholars, for example, stress that the distribution of economic & financial capabilities also matters (Paul 1994: 22, 36, 41; Stepanova 2008: 14, 18; Ayalon et al. 2014: 4f.[6]). On the one hand, economic & financial capabilities are necessary for funding, expanding and maintaining a comprehensive military apparatus (Treverton & Jones 2005: 5; cf. also Stepanova 2008: 18). On the other hand, however, economic & financial capabilities can also serve as a source of power on its own within international economic relationships.[7] Like military capabilities in asymmetric conflicts typically also economic & financial capabilities are distributed extremely unequally: Topdogs typically have more economic & financial capabilities than underdogs, this is due to them usually having control over larger territories and populations (i.e., larger markets in which they can generate tax profits), as well as better international trade relations and

6 Mack describes economic resources as a crucial type of resources, too. Besides funding the military, they allow also funding projects profiting the civilian public such as welfare programs. Mack, however, also sees a vulnerability of the topdogs: They need to be careful that their economic and political resources are not all consumed by the costs of the conflict (Mack 1975: 185).

7 Especially trade opportunities and market size can be considered as a source of power (cf. e.g. Meunier & Nicolaïdis 2005, using the example of the European Union as "trade power").

tax systems (cf. also Paul 1994: 22, 36, 41; Stepanova 2008: 14, 18; Ayalon et al. 2014: 4f.).

Social/institutional capabilities: Besides the role of military and economic power ratios (categories often also labeled as "hard power"), other, more comprehensive approaches additionally emphasize organizational differences amongst the conflict parties (Wassermann 2015: 19; Arasli 2011: 5) such as the varying social relationships (Gallo & Marzano 2009: 2), the socialization of the individual actors involved in conflicts and their unequal status in the international community (Daase 1999: 92ff.; Arasli 2011: 5). These inequalities offer potentials and constraints for the conflict parties, similar to having more or less military or economic & financial capabilities. During this study, the term social/institutional capabilities is used to refer to these potentials and constraints. Again, within asymmetric conflict the distribution of social/institutional capabilities also tends to be strongly unequal: Topdogs are (at least ideal-typically) states, while underdogs are *non-state actors* or at least "*not yet states*" (Ayalon et al. 2014: 5). On the one hand, this means that the governance structures differ. Topdogs as states are typically organized in a more cohesive way than underdogs as non-state actors, or at least as not yet fully developed states. They typically have a more advanced political apparatus and bureaucracy (Daase 1999: 216ff. quoting also Mitchel 1991: 33) and the ability to exert the monopoly on violence comparatively well (Daase 1999: 228ff.). On the other hand, topdogs as states are full members of the international community (Daase 1999: 77-79; Ayalon et al. 2014: 5f.), whilst underdogs, in contrast, have not, or at least not yet, been granted the status of being recognized as a state. The social status matters particularly for the conflict parties, as it is connected to a series of privileges and obligations. As full members of the international community states enjoy some privileges within the international community, the protection of the sovereignty of each state as one of the core principles of the international law, for example, is an especially beneficial privilege and one which the other actors do not enjoy (Daase 1999: 55f.; Patapan 2015: 14). The higher degree of formal recognition, moreover, can make it easier to get access to certain diplomatic arenas such as International Organizations or maintaining official diplomatic relations.

Conclusion – Unmissable and significant disparity: Altogether the ideal-typical asymmetric conflict structure can be described as a structure with a significant and transversal inequality concerning the distribution of capabilities (cf. overview in table 3).

Table 3: Characteristics of an asymmetric conflict structure – Distribution of capabilities

		"Topdog"	"Underdog"
Hard power	**Military capabilities**	Superior • *High manpower* • *High-tech equipment*	Inferior • *Limited personnel* • *Simple equipment*
	Financial / economic capabilities	Superior • *High budget* • *Strong economy* • *Various trade relations*	Inferior • *Low budget* • *Small economy* • *Few (regular) trade relations*
Status & governance structures	**Social / institutional capabilities**	Superior ("State") • *Recognized statehood* ➔ *As state full member of the international community* ➔ *Full sovereignty* ➔ *Good access to diplomatic arenas* • *Cohesive organization, fully developed state structures*	Inferior ("non-state actor" / "not yet state") • *No or incomplete recognition* ➔ *Not a full member of the international community* ➔ *No full sovereignty* ➔ *Limited access to diplomatic arenas* • *Less cohesive form of organization, possibly developing state structures*

3.2.2.3 Overview: Opportunities, interests and pathways explaining the selection of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts

The unequal distribution of capabilities characterizing the structure of asymmetric conflicts shapes different interests for different types of conflict parties and creates different opportunities for their external communication. It, therefore, determines which communication strategies are promising and, for this reason, are ultimately selected by the strategically thinking conflict parties. Evaluating the impact of the interests, the opportunities to convince and the opportunities to present of the conflict parties separately, in total three pathways can be described that explain how the distribution of capabilities influences the selection of strategies of external communication of conflict parties during asymmetric conflicts:

On the one hand, the distribution of capabilities has an impact on what the different conflict parties perceive as their strategic *interests*. The divergent interests, in turn, influence the selection of strategies of external communication:

1) The divergent interests shaped by the unequal distribution of capabilities can be expected to influence the selection of strategies of external communication of strategically thinking actors, as the interests determine what the individual goals

of the conflict parties are. The powerful conflict parties, for whom the status quo offers (economic & financial, military or social/institutional) benefits that give them relative or absolute advantages, can be expected from a strategic perspective to be eager to keep their benefits. They plan their external communication in a way that serves them and secures these privileges. In contrast, the less powerful conflict parties, that do not enjoy these benefits but that suffer from disadvantages, can use external communication as a tool to fulfill their desire to overcome the status quo with these disadvantages. Being the communication strategies meeting these divergent demands the best, the powerful actors can be expected to select branding and the less powerful actors shaming as their external communication strategy. In this study, this type of pathway is going to be called "*prioritization pathway*".

On the other hand, the distribution of capabilities creates different opportunities for the different conflict parties' external communication. In order to maximize the success of their external communication, the strategically thinking conflict parties can be expected to adapt their strategies of external communication according to these opportunities:

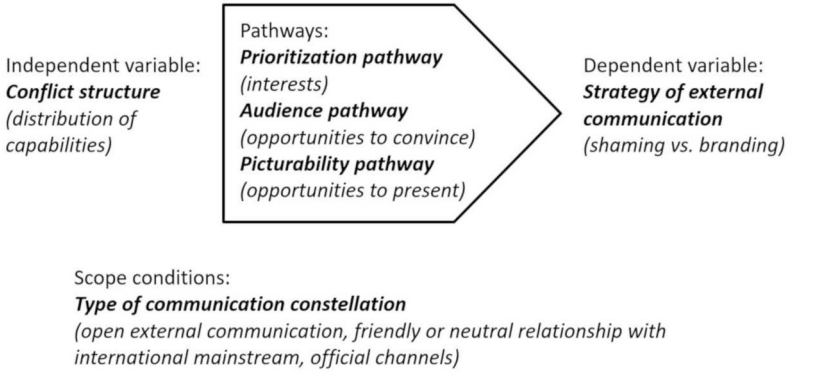
2) On the one hand, the distribution of capabilities creates varying opportunities to convince for the different the conflict parties. How they and their position within the conflict are perceived by the target audience due to their position in the conflict influences the conditions for successful communication directly: Cognition research has shown that third-party observers of an unequal competition tend to sympathize with the underdog. The bias of this cognitive effect is a disadvantage for the more powerful conflict party that makes referring to the conflict, as is typical for shaming, attractive for the underdog but decreases the attractiveness of referring to the conflict for its more powerful opponent. In this study, this pathway is going to be called "*audience pathway*".

3) On the other hand, the distribution of capabilities creates varying opportunities to present for the different conflict parties, i.e., which particular types of stories the communicating conflict parties can use credibly for branding or shaming. First of all, these opportunities differ for the different conflict parties, as the asymmetric distribution of capabilities makes them choose different military and political strategies with visibly varying consequences. This tends to provide more pictures and stories that are particularly promising for shaming to the underdogs. In contrast, the higher economic & financial capabilities make it easier for the topdogs to fund prestigious projects and to present their economic attractiveness. Moreover, the higher social/institutional capabilities make it easier for topdogs to show off their good international relations as well as their strategic importance. The topdogs, therefore, tend to have more promising pictures and stories for branding. In this study, this pathway is going to be called "*picturability pathway*".

The following section 3.3. introduces the prioritization pathway in detail. Section 3.4., then, introduces the audience pathway and the picturability pathway

in detail: The sub-sections 3.4.1. and 3.4.2. explain which opportunities to convince and present the different conflict parties have due to the asymmetric conflict structure. Sub-section 3.4.3., conclusively, discusses how conflict parties involved in asymmetric conflicts can be expected to adapt their strategy of external communication according to the opportunities the conflict structure offers them.

Figure 1: Overview of the theoretical model



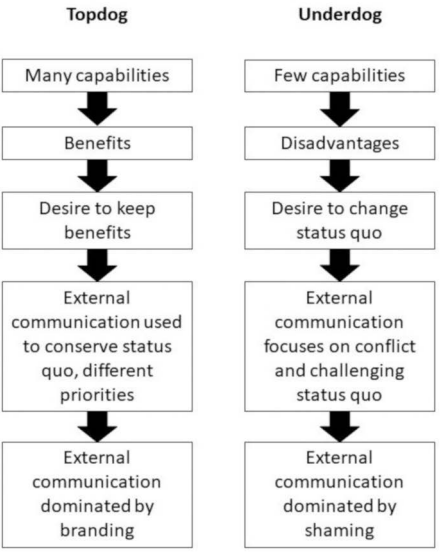
3.3 Interests

The literature on asymmetric conflicts not only describes the strongly unequal distribution of capabilities that characterizes the conflict structure of asymmetric conflicts (cf. section 3.2.2.2), it also shows that this strongly unequal distribution has a strong impact on what the different conflict parties perceive as their strategic *interests*. For the selection of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts this is important, as the resulting divergent interests, in turn, influence the selection of strategies of external communication. In this study, this pathway is going to be called "*prioritization pathway*".

The next sections summarize, whilst drawing on the existing literature on asymmetric conflicts, which divergent interests are shaped by the unequal distribution of capabilities characterizing asymmetric conflicts (a visual overview of the prioritization pathway can be found in figure 2):

1. The significantly unequal distribution of capabilities creates divergent benefits and disadvantages for the dif-ferent conflict parties. Underdogs, having few

Figure 2: The prioritization pathway



capabilities, suffer from disadvantages, while topdogs, hav-ing many capabilities, profit from benefits.

2. The benefits and disadvantages, in turn, shape divergent interests of the conflict parties. Suffering from dis-advantages, underdogs have a strong interest in challenging the status quo and the negative implications of the conflict are considered to be the most urgent issue. Topdogs, profiting from benefits, in contrast, are comparatively satisfied with the status quo and have a strong desire to keep their benefits.
3. These interests, in turn, influence also the external communication. It is adapted to the interests of the conflict parties. The external communication of underdogs securitizes the conflict, focuses on challenging the status quo and the conflict and uses references to the conflict as a point of vantage against their topdog opponents. The external communication of topdogs, in contrast, normalizes the conflict, focusing on different priorities in order to take care of its benefits and avoiding abundant references to the conflict, which are a sore point – as referring to the conflict too often might create an impression of instability that might undermine the top-dogs' efforts to promote their other priorities.

4. "Shaming" (cf. section 2.2.1.) has all the characteristics needed to fulfill the demands underdogs have for their external communication, as they are listed in the last paragraph. "Branding" (cf. section 2.2.2.), in contrast, has all the characteristics needed to fulfill the demands topdogs have for their external communication, as they are listed in the last paragraph. Underdogs, consequently, select a shaming-dominated strategy of ex-ternal communication, whereas topdogs choose a branding-dominated strategy of external communication.

After discussing how the distribution of capabilities in general shapes the interests of the conflict parties and this way the selection of strategies of external communication (section 3.3.1.), the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities (section 3.3.2.) and social/institutional capabilities (section 3.3.3.) on the interests of the conflict parties and on the selection of strategies of external communication is discussed in the following sections in detail.

3.3.1 General pattern – Interests resulting from the distribution of capabilities

Benefits & disadvantages resulting from the distribution of capabilities

While underdogs transversally only have a few capabilities, topdogs have many. This unequal distribution of capabilities offers divergent benefits and imposes divergent disadvantages on the conflict parties:

Having transversally significantly fewer capabilities, underdogs suffer from disadvantages: A consequence of having fewer military capabilities means that they enjoy lesser territorial and governmental control than the topdogs.[8] A consequence of having fewer economic & financial capabilities equates to enjoying less wealth than the topdogs (cf. also Mack 1975: 195).[9] And having less social/institutional capabilities means a lack of recognition for them as well (Ayalon et al. 2014: 5; cf. also Daase 1999: 220ff.).

Having transversally significantly more capabilities, for topdogs, in contrast, the conflict structure offers a series of benefits: A consequence of having more military capabilities is that they are able to acquire more political power and control (cf. also de la Calle & Sánchez-Cuenca 2015: 797). Having more economic & financial capabilities and, therefore, a stronger economy, topdogs also typically enjoy more wealth (cf. also Mack 1975: 195). And having more social/institutional capabilities

8 The nexus between military power and territorial control has been explored more in detail by de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca (2015: esp. 797).

9 Even though some non-state actors like terror organizations have been able to accumulate notable possessions, too (Forbes 24.01.2018), the total economic revenue even of small states still tends to be bigger (World Bank 2018d; OECD 2018a).

gives them a high social status in the international community (Ayalon et al. 2014: 5; cf. also Daase 1999: 220ff.).

(Dis)satisfaction with the status quo

Being confronted with severe disadvantages, underdogs are highly dissatisfied and deem the conflict and challenging the status quo as the single most important priority. Enjoying benefits, topdogs in contrast are comparatively satisfied and want not only to focus on the conflict but also to defend their benefits:

Disadvantages such as less territorial and political control, relative poverty and a lack of recognition are likely reasons for the less powerful conflict parties of the asymmetric conflict to be dissatisfied with the status quo. This dissatisfaction can be expected to fuel the desire of the underdogs to take over full political and military control over the territory claimed by them, to enjoy (at least) the same level of wealth as their opponents and to be (in secessionist or anti-occupation conflicts) recognized as a state or (in civil wars) official government and, therefore, shape the strong interest to initiate a challenge against the status quo (on the interests concerning the status quo cf. also Ordóñez 2017: 53; Paul 1994: 129; Geller 2000: 89[10]; Daase 1999: 94). Furthermore, typically in conflicts with an asymmetric conflict structure the conflict tends to be more visible for the populations affiliated to the underdog than for those affiliated with the topdog (cf. also section 3.4.2.3.). Suffering from the disadvantages, therefore, the population can be expected to pressurize their leadership to make the conflict and the demand to overcome the deficits of the status quo to the single number one priority of the underdog, even if they have not already decided to pursue this goal for the power-political reasons mentioned before.[11]

Having more territorial and political control, more wealth and more recognition, on the one hand, the status quo is much more pleasant for topdogs than for underdogs. On the other hand, this, however, also means that the topdogs have much more to lose than their underdog opponents (on the interests concerning

10 Geller, however, focuses only on (unequal) state actors (Geller 2000).

11 This theoretical claim fits well to the observations of social psychologists examining the interactions and communicative behavior of the participants of encounters involving participants from both sides of an asymmetric conflict: When examining encounters of teachers from both sides of the conflict, Ifat Maoz e.g. observed that the two sides showed interest in different topics. The topdog side was dominant when the discussions were focusing on educational, not conflict-related topics, while the underdog side in this case tended to be more passive. In contrast, when focusing on the conflict, the underdog side became dominant (Maoz 2000: 266ff.). Another study of Maoz shows that in general encounters using a "confrontational" approach, where typically the discussion focuses on the conflict, participants from the underdog side are more dominant than in encounters using a coexistence approach, which focuses less on the conflict (Maoz 2011: 118ff.).

the status quo cf. also Gallo & Marzano 2009: 6; Wirtz 2012: 9; Daase 1999: 94). Profiting from the aforementioned benefits resulting from possessing many capabilities, topdogs have an interest in defending and maintaining (or, if possible, even expanding) these benefits.[12] Unlike for underdogs for the topdogs, therefore, the conflict is not the only topic that matters, but only one topic out of many different topics mattering for them.[13]

The selection of external communication strategies based on the conflict parties' interests

From a strategic point of view, it can be expected that the conflict parties adapt their strategies of external communication in a way that serves their divergent interests as conflict parties that as was described in the previous section:

First of all, it can be expected that the conflict parties *focus on their priorities*.[14] As underdogs deem the conflict and challenging the status quo as the single number one priority, it can be expected that their external communication is also dominated by this topic. Topdogs, in contrast, have more topics than only the conflict as a priority. Therefore, it can be expected that they have the ambition to present also issues beyond the conflict in their external communication.

Furthermore, it can be expected that the conflict parties try to *avoid sore points* harming their interests in their external communication.[15] As it is going to be shown more in detail in the sections 3.3.2. and 3.3.3., for example, referring too often to the conflict can be risky for topdogs, as this can contribute to creating an impression of instability and loss of control that can harm their interests. Therefore, from a strategic point of view, it is wise for topdogs to avoid referring to such

12 Indeed, the fear of losses has also been identified in the conflict resolution literature as an (also psychological) driving force within the motivations of conflict parties (Powell & Maoz 2014: 230 referring also to Bland & Powell 2014).

13 For the populations affiliated with the topdogs typically the conflict is less visible. Therefore, also the topdogs can expect lower domestic pressure to focus exclusively on this topic. Indeed, Halabi and Sonnenschein argue that it is often even uncomfortable for the populations on the topdog side to think and discuss about the conflict, as doing so might raise issues resulting from the position of dominance challenging their positive self-image (Halabi & Sonnenschein 2004: 380).

14 The assumption that strategically thinking actors focus on their priorities is not only common sense but also resembled in the idea that "priority management" is the key to efficiency which is presented also by scholars from the field of business and economics (cf. e.g. Govoreanu et al. 2010, quoting also the rule of thumb commonly known as the "Pareto principle" that in many contexts about 80 percent of the outcome can be ascribed to 20 percent of the causes).

15 The assumption that strategically thinking actors should avoid weak points is not only common sense but also reflected in strategic planning techniques that are frequently used in business and management. Identifying one's own weaknesses, for instance, is a central part of the so-called SWOT analysis. Getting to know one's weaknesses is perceived to be necessary to avoid threats (cf. e.g. Weng & Liu 2018: 275; Pelz 2020).

sore points by avoiding corresponding references as much as possible. Underdogs, in contrast, can exploit the sore points of their topdog opponents as points of vantage freely, considering that they have little to lose and using the points of vantage might help them with challenging the status quo by harming the image of their opponents.

Moreover, a strong negative framing can also overshadow actual positive achievements of the topdog (e.g. diplomatic success, prestigious projects, economic success). In contrast, a focus on positive communication can help *fostering and stabilizing existing relationships* or even help to build up new relationships. Indeed, topdogs need to consider this in order to maintain flourishing business relationships it might even not be enough to merely refrain from harmful negative associations, but it might be even necessary to foster these relationships by using external communication actively for promotion (cf. section 2.2.2.).

In general, topdogs can be expected to have an interest in creating a perception of *normalization* with their external communication, as this allows them shifting the attention away from potentially harmful sore points and toward their strengths and, thereby, avoiding external pressure and safeguarding their economic ties and social status and the related privileges.[16] For underdogs, in contrast, continuously *emphasizing* a permanent *crisis* and the *singularity* of this crisis is a good opportunity to trigger pressure against their opponents and thus harm their economic wealth and status in the international community (analogous to the logic of "securitization"[17]).

Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The characteristics described in the last section that the conflict parties consider when adapting their external communication according to their interests which are shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure are characteristics that are best provided by those strategies of external communication that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" or "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). Shaming allows the underdogs, therefore, to easily focus on their single most important topic. With using shaming underdogs can feature (alleged) misdeeds of

16 The communicative practice of drawing away the attention from negative issues by staging more positive issues has pejoratively also been labeled as "white-washing" (Weiss 2016: 698), respectively, "green-washing", if the positive issues are related to sustainability or environmental protection (Shani 2018: 633), or "pink-washing", if related to LGQBT-friendly actions (Weiss 2016: 698; cf. also Ellison 2013).

17 According to the eponymous literature, "securitization" can be understood as a process in which the urgency and necessity to intervene with extraordinary measures is justified by referring to an extraordinarily harmful ("existential") threat (Taureck 2006: 54f.; cf. also Buzan et al. 1998; Wæver 1995).

their topdog opponents and this way question the status quo, encouraging interventions by appealing to the moral and normative responsibility of the international community and illustrating the severity and uniqueness of the conflict. Shaming, allowing to feature the conflict and misdeeds of the opponent, is also the ideal strategy to exploit the vulnerability of the topdogs, as topdogs rely greatly on avoiding an impression of instability and not complying with international norms and values as points of vantage.

Branding, i.e., positive self-depiction, in contrast, allows the topdogs to feature and promote their strengths and achievements and this way to foster their economic relations and social/institutional status (cf. section 2.2.2.). As branding does not require any reference to the conflict and typically also does not use such corresponding references, it, furthermore, helps sidelining and normalizing the conflict, shifting away the attention from stigmata, events and practices that show the topdogs in a negative light and could be used to challenge the status quo. Considering that for maintaining flourishing business relationships it might not even be enough to refrain from harmful negative associations, it might even be necessary to foster these relationships by using external communication actively for promotion – it might be harmful to topdogs to use shaming, but it can even be harmful to them not to use branding.

As shaming is consequently the ideal strategy for underdogs and branding is the ideal strategy for the topdogs from the point of view of their interests, it can be expected that they select the corresponding strategies and that the external communication of underdogs, therefore, is dominated by shaming and the communication of topdogs by branding.

3.3.2 Economic & financial interests

Looking specifically at the economic & financial dimension, as mentioned, it can be expected that having more economic & financial capabilities and, therefore, a stronger economy and more comprehensive trade and investment relationships lets topdogs profit from more wealth. This is a benefit neither the political leadership nor the populations of the topdogs want to lose. Having something to lose, however, makes the topdogs also vulnerable. Consequently, they will consider this also in their external communication and prioritize promoting their economic strengths and avoid any references that might have the potential to harm their economic relations. Underdogs, in contrast, have not to take care of avoiding references that have the potential to harm economic relations, as they have no benefits they can lose. Quite the opposite, underdogs can use references that have the potential to harm economic relations in their external communication to harm their topdog opponents.

Especially, the impression of instability has been pointed out by scholars to have the potential to harm economic relations and wealth. Messages creating the perception of instability have the potential to discomfit (potential) economic partners, clients and investors abroad (Cliff 2012; cf. also Amodio & Di Maio 2018; Eckstein & Tsiddon 2004).[18] Instability is typically perceived as a risk for foreign investments and economic cooperation (cf. e.g. Tabassam et al.: 327). The perception of instability, therefore, might deter potential partners from setting up new cooperation projects and/or investments or even discourage them from maintaining existing ones. This conventional wisdom that *instability harms economic cooperation* is shaped by the knowledge from previous crisis situations and crisis situations in other places and is also reaffirmed by a multitude of economic studies examining the relationship between political stability and economic growth (e.g. Alesina et al. 1996; Veiga & Aisen 2011[19]). In particular, the uncertainty regarding the social and political context caused by instability is described by these studies as harmful to the economy (e.g. Tabassam et al. 2016: 327; Asteriou & Price 2000: 4). Especially for some lucrative but sensitive branches such as tourism the perception of a state to be unstable and unable to provide security are particularly detrimental (Sönmez 1998; Avraham & Ketter 2008).

Having comparatively little to lose, underdogs, in contrast, do not have to care much about possible negative implications of an impression of instability. Quite the opposite, this is a good point of vantage for them, as it can help to harm their topdog opponents. They can use shaming to create the impression and to damage the image of their topdog opponents. This, in course, can urge the international community or at least individual states or parts of the civil society to impose sanctions, boycotts or divestment on the topdog opponents that might harm them economically (Kriesberg 2009: 6).[20] Having a lot to lose, in contrast, the topdogs are faced with harmful implications of an impression of instability and these are a severe sore point. Referring too often to the conflict themselves, therefore, for them is highly risky, as this might foster an impression of instability.

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18 Cf. Cliff 2012 on both stability and instability as a potential political resource.

19 Different studies deal with different forms of instability: Some studies deal with the propensity of government collapse or other significant changes of government constellations or forms (e.g. Alesina et al. 1996). Other studies include also the role of violence and social unrest as a source of instability (e.g. Tabassam et al.: 326; Asteriou & Price 2000: 6). Okafor (2017: 208), for example, examined also the influence of terrorism. Some of the studies also provide justifications for the causal direction and not only observe correlations (e.g. Asteriou & Price 2000: 8ff.).

20 However, it needs to be also acknowledged that how, under which conditions and to which extent different measures such as boycotting, divestment and sanctions work is still an ongoing discussion among political activists as well as in academia.

As such references are typical for shaming, it can be expected that topdogs avoid a frequent use of shaming and that they instead use branding, which additionally offers the advantage that it allows them to promote their strengths. For underdogs, being able to use the impression of instability as a point of vantage against their opponents, means that shaming is a very promising strategy and they, therefore, can be expected to use it frequently.

3.3.3 Social/institutional interests

Looking specifically at the social/institutional dimension, as mentioned, it is to be expected that having more social/institutional capabilities gives the topdogs a higher social status in the international community. Unlike the underdogs, topdogs are acknowledged as states and are full members of the international community. This high status entails certain obligations and expectations, but also some attractive privileges, such as the principle of sovereignty of each full member of the international community, valuable strategic, diplomatic and political international relations and cooperation and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs.[21] Last but not least, from the high social/institutional status also comparatively strong justifications for supporting topdogs can be drawn. Often, indeed, it is not only the underdogs who receive significant amounts of foreign support, the topdogs do as well. To maintain their support, however, the foreign supporters typically need to justify their support (especially domestically, if they are democratic states). Whilst the support for underdogs can be justified comparatively easily due to their victimhood image, this is not as easily justified for topdogs, as they are wealthier and militarily more powerful (cf. also section 3.4.1.). If topdogs can prove to be functioning states, supporting them can be justified by framing the topdogs as legitimate members of the international community and strategically important, stable partners. Again (as previously mentioned during the consideration of the benefits in the economic & financial dimension), it is in the interest of the topdogs not to lose these benefits. Having something to lose, again, however, makes the topdogs also vulnerable.

The high social/institutional status of topdogs, however, is, indeed, vulnerable: On the one hand, the high social/institutional status of a topdog can be undermined by raising doubts about whether the topdog complies with international norms (Daase 1999: 236ff.), as this questions if the topdog is an actor with shared values.[22] On the other hand, the high social/institutional status of topdogs can

21 Cf. Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations 1945).

22 Scholars examining asymmetric conflicts have pointed out that for topdogs, as they are states, the expectations are typically higher than for underdogs. As they are the primary legal subjects of the international law and full members of the international community, for many international norms and contracts states are the primary addressees. The status of statehood,

be undermined by the impression of instability and the inability of the topdog to exert the monopoly on violence as one of the core features of states (Daase 1999: 228ff.),[23] as both the non-compliance with international norms and the instability would question the ability of the topdogs to be reliable, stable partners as well. Especially pictures related to conflict have the potential to be corresponding pitfalls. Referring to the conflict can easily become a lose-lose option for topdogs: Neither pictures portraying a topdog as perpetrator nor as victim really fit to the expectations toward the role of a state (Ayalon et al. 2014: 4; Daase 1999: 236ff.; Gallo & Marzano 2009: 3) or as a reliable, stable partner. The former shows the unwillingness of the actor to comply with the norms of the international community. The latter risks the actor being perceived as weak and unstable.[24]

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therefore, also is linked with particular obligations and expectations and as main creators of the international legal order states are also monitored by parts of the international public whether they comply with their own norms or not (Ayalon et al. 2014: 4; Daase 1999: 236ff.).

23 States are expected to be able to exert their monopoly on violence and provide security. Indeed, upholding the monopoly on violence and providing security have been described often as one of the key features and a core function of functioning states and are features that are from a security political perspective necessary to be a valuable partner (cf. also Daase 1999: 228ff.).

24 While for an underdog the perception of weakness primarily is a potential source of empathy, for a topdog in its role as state this perception is far more problematic, as it raises doubts about its ability to exert control and provide security, which is expected from a state (Daase 1999: 222ff.), as well as about the credibility of its military power (this phenomenon has also been labeled as "Mogadishu effect":[57] In 1993 a US operation to arrest the Somali warlord Aidid failed badly. The US special forces team incurred severe losses and the pictures of a mutilated soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu disseminated quickly around the world, resulting in a quick withdrawal of the US troops. The images and related reactions severely harmed the military credibility and the trust in the ability of the USA to enforce its security policies, both domestically as well as internationally. Referring to these events, the corresponding cognitive/psychological effect has been named also "Mogadishu effect", cf. Münkler 2005: 26). Moreover, staging violence of the opponent in the form of a permanent and abundant use of shaming can create an impression of a lack of control and the loss of the ability to exert the monopoly on violence. The impression of a lack of control and the loss of the ability to exert the loss of the monopoly on violence can even contribute to shaping a perception of the topdog state as a "failed state" and, therefore, a security risk out of control. In the worst case (from the perspective of the topdog), this impression, in turn, could be even used by third-party states as justification for intervening into the conflict against the will of the topdog (Langford 1999: 61, 62 – Langford summarizes problems arising from failed states and debates even about the need of trusteeship-like measures to restore stability in failed states, pointing out that internal failure is often linked to a broader danger to international security). Pictures and stories of weakness and instability thereby can be used by third-party actors for justifying corresponding extraordinary measures such as interventions, as these pictures and stories are often also related to reference objects that are typically accepted as reference objects for securitization (Buzan et al. 1998; Wæver 1995), such as humanitarian interests and the international security. Using a narrative of victimhood, powerlessness or

As such references to the conflict are typical for shaming, it can be expected that topdogs avoid the frequent use of shaming, preferring the use of branding instead, which additionally offers the advantage that it allows them to present themselves as reliable, stable partners with shared values. For underdogs, being able to use the impression of instability and accusations of alleged non-compliance with international norms as a point of vantage against their opponents, in contrast, shaming is a very promising strategy and they, therefore, can be expected to use it frequently.

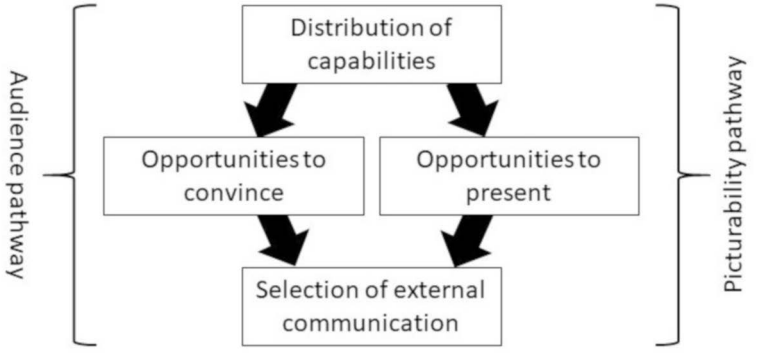
3.4 Opportunities

The strongly and transversally unequal distribution of capabilities that characterizes the conflict structure of asymmetric conflict does not only shape divergent interests but also divergent *opportunities* for the conflict parties to use branding and shaming credibly: The unequal distribution shapes divergent *opportunities to convince* with shaming, and respectively, branding (*audience pathway*) as well as divergent *opportunities to present* for the use of shaming, and respectively, branding (*picturability pathway*). The divergent opportunities, in turn, influence which strategies of external communication the conflict parties can use successfully (cf. overview in figure 3).

Step by step the following sections theorize the different elements of the resulting pathways. Section 3.4.1. discusses how the distribution of capabilities influences which opportunities to convince conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts have. Section 3.4.2. discusses how the distribution of capabilities influences which opportunities to present conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts have. This, therefore, shows that it can be expected from a theoretical perspective that the asymmetric conflict structure provides better opportunities to convince and present for the use of shaming for the underdogs and better opportunities to convince and present for the use of branding for the topdogs. Section 3.4.3., finally, discusses how the resulting opportunities shape the selection of strategies of external communication, arguing that the conflict parties can be expected to act strategically and that they, consequently, predominantly select those strategies of external communication for

even of a lack of control would, moreover, conflict with notions such as sovereignty and the principle of non-interference and create a sore point that can be attacked by referring to (at least partially) competing notions such as the idea of a "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) (cf. Acharya 2013 – Acharya shows that R2P is a discourse with increasing relevance allowing it to circumvent the norms of sovereignty and non-interference) or the fight against international terrorism to protect the security, as the inability of the topdog can be used as an argument for external interventions. In order to cast no doubts about the applicability of the norm of sovereignty and to avoid damaging or even contributing to deconstruct the idea, therefore, topdogs need to avoid respective narratives.

Figure 3: The elements of the audience pathway (Distribution of capabilities opportunities to convince selection of external communication) and the picturability pathway (Distribution of capabilities opportunities to present selection of external communication)



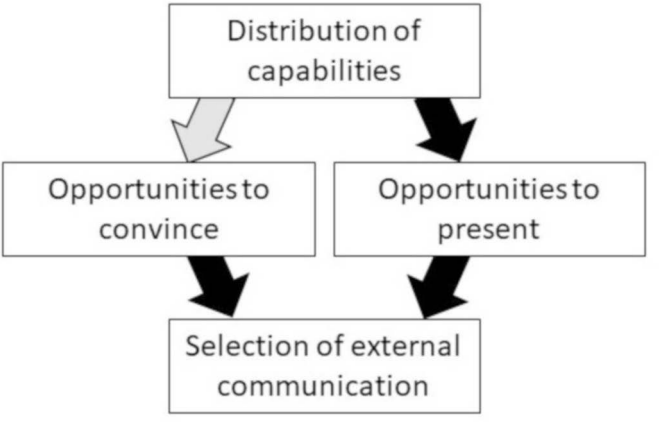
which they have the best opportunities: Topdogs, having better opportunities for branding, select predominantly branding; underdogs, having better opportunities for shaming, predominantly select shaming.

3.4.1 Opportunities to convince

The following section discusses how the asymmetric distribution of capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to convince for the different conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts (cf. overview in figure 4):

As discussed in section 3.2.2.2. asymmetric conflicts are characterized by a transversally and significantly unequal distribution of capabilities amongst the involved conflict parties. The disparity in the ideal-typical structure of asymmetric conflicts is so strong and omnipresent that it can be merely denied by the conflict parties or hidden from audiences abroad and typically the conflict parties do not even try to do so. The perception of the very unequal distribution has a strong impact on the *opportunities to convince* the conflict parties. It triggers an underdog/topdog effect shaping divergent opportunities to convince for the different conflict parties: As scholars from cognition psychology also argue, it is due to this effect that third-party observers of an unequal competition tend to sympathize with the underdog. Consequently, the actor in the less powerful "underdog position" (which is partially labeled "David position", referring to the well-known biblical story of

Figure 4: Overview – Step of the audience pathway discussed in section 3.4.1. (highlighted in light grey)



David versus Goliath[25]) can more easily win over the sympathy of audiences abroad by referring to the conflict than the actor in the more powerful "topdog position" (which partially is also labeled as "Goliath position"). As shaming always refers to the opponent and thereby to the conflict as a competitive setting in which the two opponents are compared, the corresponding bias of the underdog/topdog effect makes shaming very attractive for the underdog and rather unattractive for the topdog.

Drawing on literature from conflict research and cognition psychology, section 3.4.1.1. discusses more in detail the advantages of the underdog / David position, section 3.4.1.2. considers the disadvantages of the topdog / Goliath position and section 3.4.1.3., ultimately evaluates the underdog/topdog effect as general perception bias.

3.4.1.1 The underdog / David position as a strategic asset for the underdog's external communication

The conflict parties that have far less military, and other forms of, capabilities are typically perceived as "underdogs". While their inferiority and relative military weakness is a disadvantage on the battlefield, the corresponding perception

25 In the story David, the youngest son of a family of shepherds, armed only with a slingshot and supposed to have no chance at all, confronts Goliath, a giant and strong warrior, supposed to be invincible, and defeats his opponent (1 Samuel 17).

of being the weaker actor can be used as an asset in the communicative struggle for international empathy:

The underdog position of being the weaker actor makes it easier for them to portray themselves (or even more so, their own civil population) credibly as victims (and doing so portraying their superior opponents as perpetrators). This image of victimhood can be used to arouse international compassion and sympathy (Beck & Werron 2017: 14; Münkler 2015: 157ff.[26]). The effect of being perceived as underdog and victim can be further increased by pictures visualizing this role. Especially collateral damage and military (or also political) measures affecting the civil population (allegedly) caused by the enemy create strong images that can be used by underdogs to visualize their victimhood. Especially the staging of pictures of suffering, innocent, vulnerable civilians, including especially the "presentation of refugees, crying women and desperately resisting children" (Münkler 2005: 90), gives shaming messages of underdogs a personal touch and makes it easy for audiences to feel with these individual fates, making this messages the surest way to arouse international compassion for the "David" in a "David vs. Goliath" constellation.[27]

Being perceived as weak, chanceless and a victim makes shaming also more likely to be successful: Shaming is perceived to be more credible, if it is used by the weak actor which can more easily present itself as a victim and helpless. This asset, resulting from the asymmetric perception of the conflict parties and their strength, makes shaming a particularly attractive strategy of external communication for underdogs:

On the one hand, shaming is an efficient and, therefore, attractive strategy for underdogs to convert a military defeat into reputational gains, especially if civilian structures and collateral damage are involved (Münkler 2015: 157ff. [28]). The aroused compassion and sympathy then ultimately benefit the underdogs, as they help mobilizing international aid and support. Using the example of an attack on a refugee camp used by an underdog for military purposes, Münkler argues: "The more effective a military attack is on a refugee camp, the more negative are the political consequences for the attacker. And, although the victim of the attack suffers organizational and military losses, he wins additional political legitimacy in the eyes of world opinion; as soon as he manages to convert this gain to support from neighboring countries and international organizations, he is usually able to make good the losses" (Münkler 2005: 90 f.).

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26 German edition: Münkler 2015: 157ff.; English edition: Münkler 2005: 90 f.

27 The role of pictures from the conflict and which actor can use them is going to be discussed more in detail in the sub-section introducing the "picturability pathway" following later (section 3.4.2.3.).

28 German edition: Münkler 2015: 157ff.; English edition: Münkler 2005: 90 f.

On the other hand, besides the self-portrayal as a victim, shaming allows underdogs depicting their topdog enemies as perpetrators or even to dehumanize them.[29] Unlike their enemies, they as "weak underdog" can credibly use some strong terms describing negative opponent actions such as "suppression" and "occupation", as these terms are typically linked with actions of a more powerful actor against a less powerful actor and not vice versa.[30] This way the shaming additionally gives underdogs the opportunity to damage the image of their enemies abroad and this way to possibly mobilize international pressure against their topdog opponents. [31]

The tendency of shaming being a particularly credible strategy for underdogs and a strong rhetorical weapon against topdogs is further supported by the logic used by the international media: "It is no accident that almost everywhere belligerents have come to regard these cameras [of the international media] as especially effective weapons […] The media no longer serve a war-reporting function: they have involuntarily become a participant in war, as a direct result of the asymmetrical structure that makes the new wars a confrontation between soldiers and civilians and not between soldiers and soldiers. Media-generated world opinion thus a resource of war, behind which and in which the combatants on the weaker side seek cover and protection. The political-military importance of the cameras increases in proportion to the asymmetrization of armed conflicts. The traditional neutrality of war reporting was evidently bound up with the symmetry of war, whereas the growth of asymmetrical David-and-Goliath patterns has led to forms of observation that involve taking sides and lending support" (Münkler 2005: 90).

3.4.1.2 The topdog / Goliath position as a strategic sore point for the topdog's external communication

Whilst the use of conflict-related shaming is very attractive for underdogs, in contrast, the efficient use of conflict-related messages seems to be much more complicated for topdogs: Yarchi, Samuel-Azran and Bar-David have observed that for topdogs public diplomacy is particularly challenging because of their "Goliath" position in the asymmetric power relation. While the military weakness becomes an asset for underdogs in the struggle for the support of audiences abroad, their own military strength becomes a sore point for topdogs in the same struggle. Being perceived as Goliath pushes an actor in a defensive position, i.e., in an unattractive position for external communication (Yarchi et al. 2017: 360, 361, 364, 365, 366,

29 Cf. also the discussion on the rhetorical structure and rationale of shaming in section 2.2.1.

30 Already the etymology presumes an asymmetric top-down relationship: The prefix "sub" in "suppression" means "under" (Online Etymology Dictionary 2020a) and the prefix "ob" in "occupation" means "over" (Online Etymology Dictionary 2020b).

31 Cf. also the discussion on the rationale of shaming in section 2.2.1.

373[32]). Similarly, Mack (1975: 186-187) and Arreguín-Toft (2001: 106) argue that the (unlawful) damage ("barbarism") caused by a conflict party is judged in proportion to the relative power of the different conflict parties: "Weak actors will be forgiven abuses for which strong actors will be hanged" (Arreguín-Toft 2001: 106).

3.4.1.3 The underdog / topdog effect as general perception bias

The observations of Münkler and Yarchi et al. fit quite well to research results and theories from the field of social and cognition psychology: Vandello et al. identified an "underdog effect" in a series of empirical tests, which can be described as the effect that neutral observers tend to support the underdog, i.e., an actor which is disadvantaged in comparison to its opponent (concerning the distribution of capabilities and expectations), in a competitive constellation in which an underdog is confronted with a superior opponent (Yarchi et al. 2017: 360,361,364,365,366,373[33]; Vandello et al. 2007; see also: Prell 2002). A similar study by Jeffries et al. identified a "*David and Goliath Principle*". They described the David and Goliath Principle as "the tendency for people to perceive criticism of 'David' groups (groups with low power and status) as less normatively permissible than criticism of 'Goliath' groups (groups with high power and status)" (Jeffries et al. 2012). They could observe the

32 Already earlier I have emphasized the importance of the David vs. Goliath effect in a presentation for the annual conference of the Conflict Research Society 2016 at Trinity College in Dublin (Hirschberger 2016: 13,20).

33 In a first test the participants of the study conducted in Florida were shown a list of five countries and the number of their all-time medal wins in the Olympic Games. After they had been shown this information, the interviewees were asked whom they would prefer to win a hypothetical sports competition between two of the countries. 75% of the participants supported the team with fewer medals. In another experiment, the researchers showed two different groups two different maps. One of the maps showed the comparatively large State of Israel next to the comparatively small Palestinian territories. The other map showed Israel and its neighboring countries, whereby from this perspective Israel looks comparatively small in comparison to its neighboring countries. After having been shown the maps, the participants from both groups were asked whom they would support, Israelis or Palestinians respectively Arabs. While the majority of the first group, perceiving Palestine as the underdog, supported the Palestinians, the majority of the second group perceived in the changed constellation Israel as the underdog and supported Israel (Cf. Vandello et al. 2007; see also: Prell 2002). Also, other researchers could show in experimental settings that the participants of the experiments tend to favor the underdog in different competitive contexts, such as sports competitions (Frazier & Snyder 1991; Kim et al. 2008: 2555f.), business (Kim et al. 2008: 2555f.), arts (Kim et al. 2008: 2556ff.) or elections (Ceci & Kain 1982). Furthermore, Kim et al. could confirm the underdog effect also in abstract settings (Kim et al. 2008: 2558ff.). As a limit of the underdog effect Kim et all. identify the prevalence of the self-interest of the audience. If the observing and judging audience has their own interests contrasting with those of the underdog, the influence of self-interest tends to be bigger than the influence of the underdog effect (Kim et al. 2008: 2553 ff.).

effect for Western as well as for Chinese participants of the study and, therefore, it can be assumed that the effect exists across different cultures (Jeffries et al. 2012).

Vandello et al. explain the empathy for the disadvantaged actor by arguing that "[c]ompetitive scenarios of inequality [~~may~~] arouse people's sense of fairness and justice, general principles people care about deeply" (Vandello et al. 2007: 1604) and that people tend to be averted to inequalities and "unfairness" (Vandello et al. 2007: 1604 f.; cf. also Kim et al. 2008: 2552). The perception of another asymmetric constellation as unfair can also be easily associated with similar social cleavages that play an important role for the identity of individuals and social groups that feel unjustly treated as well and, therefore, see parallels to their own emotional history (Foreign Policy 23.06.2010). Examples are, for instance, the Irish Republicans in their struggle against British Unionists (Foreign Policy 23.06.2010) and the (anti-imperialist) European Left (with the exemption of the Anti-Germans) in their struggle against capitalism, which traditionally have a particularly strong "Pro-Palestinian" orientation in the discourse of the conflict in Israel and Palestine, another prominent asymmetric struggle.[34]

Prell portends, furthermore, that within culture, arts and religion narrations with empathy for the disadvantaged are widespread as well: As examples he mentions the story of David versus Goliath in the Bible (this has been discussed above), the fight of the small Rebel Alliance in the Star Wars movies against the mighty and by far superior Galactic Empire or the participation of a Jamaican bobsled team at the 1988 Olympic Games (Prell 2002). Kim et al. also mention similar examples (Kim et al. 2008: 2550ff.). The deep rootedness of the underdog effect in culture, arts and religions and its emotional power makes it a strong cognitive shortcut for audiences confronted with conflict-related messages.

Additionally, a victory of the underdog is more spectacular and sensational than a victory of the superior actor and the idea of the underdog winning is, therefore, more exciting and interesting for audiences than the idea of the superior actor winning (Kim et al. 2008: 2552). Also taking on the challenge despite of being disadvantaged can be interpreted as brave and virtuous; and even when losing underdogs can be appreciated for their courage and their brave struggle (Moskalenko & McCauley 2019: 69). A loss of a superior actor, in contrast, would offer an opportunity for "Schadenfreude" (malicious glee about one's failure), as those riding higher have further to fall and their fall, therefore, is more spectacular and unexpected (Kim et al. 2008: 2552f.).

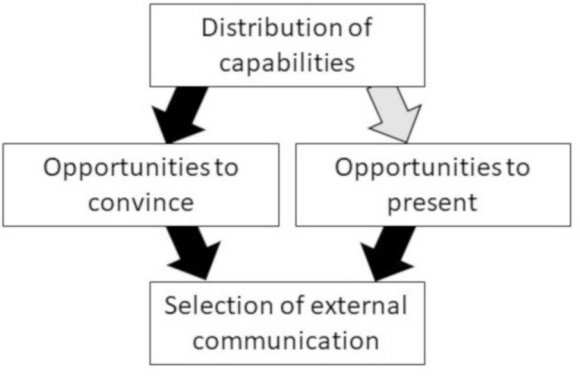
34 Azeem Ibrahim, for example, observes that "Palestine has been brutalized by decades of occupation, and [that] the suffering of Palestinians raises natural sympathy" within the left in Europe and the United States and that many "left-wing Jews share this justified anger at Israel's policies" (Foreign Policy 18.11.2019).

The underdog effect can be assumed to be particularly strong in settings that are particularly emotional. Conflicts and their cruel consequences and the moral reflections of them offer such a setting. As previously discussed, the underdog effect provides very different conditions for the external communication of topdogs (in the "Goliath" or "topdog position") and underdogs (in the "David" or "underdog position"). Mansdorf & Kedar (Mansdorf & Kedar 2008; Mansdorf 2018) refer to the topdog/underdog effect which can be observed during asymmetric conflicts also as a "psychological asymmetry", which according to Mansdorf is "the relative advantage of the weaker party in a conflict to engage in otherwise immoral and illegal behavior against a militarily stronger opponent" (Mansdorf 2018). Similarly, Avraham (Avraham 2009: 204; referring to Gilboa 2006, Navon 2006 and Galloway 2005) observes a tendency that the (international) mass media tend to sympathize with the weaker side in the conflict and concludes, therefore, that it is a big opportunity for the underdog to promote a "victim image".

3.4.2 Opportunities to present

Besides opportunities to convince the strongly unequal distribution of capabilities among the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts also shapes different *opportunities to present* for the conflict parties. The following section discusses, therefore, how the asymmetric distribution of capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to convince for the different conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts:

Figure 5: Overview – Step of the picturability pathway discussed in section 3.4.2. (highlighted in light grey)



First, the following section 3.4.2.1. explains that opportunities to present matter, as the conflict parties cannot completely make up the events they feature in

their external communication without risking to harm their credibility. Section 3.4.2.2., then, explains the general pattern of how the distribution of capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts. The following sections, then, discuss more specifically how the distributions of military (section 3.4.2.3.), economic & financial (section 3.4.2.4.), and social/institutional capabilities (section 3.4.2.5.) shape the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts.

3.4.2.1 Observable events and opportunities for external communication

What conflict parties can, or cannot, present in their external communication credibly strongly relies on what can be publicly observed about the conflict and the conflict parties. I.e., what is observable determines the opportunities to present of the conflict parties. At first sight, an option to circumvent the absence of opportunities to present could be to make up stories or to fake pictures. In practice, however, this is not a promising alternative. As besides the conflict parties usually other actors, such as journalists[35] and NGOs, can, and do, observe the events of the conflict, communicating and spreading information about the observed events, thus completely making up what is happening would be very risky for the conflict parties. Though the representation of events enjoys a definite autonomy (allowing e.g. different interpretations and frames for events of the conflict and selecting different perspectives), "fakes" are only likely to be successful, if they fit within the context from the point of view of the knowledge and/or opinion of the targeted audience (cf. also Sandhu 2009: 74; Bourdieu 2013: 296). Bluffing might work from a short-term perspective, but if third-party actors can credibly reveal inconsistencies with observable events making the accounts of the communicating conflict party appear implausible, the communicating conflict party risks a detrimental loss of credibility in the long-term perspective.[36] For this reason, the options that are promising for the external communication of the conflict parties are those that are not in conflict with observable events.

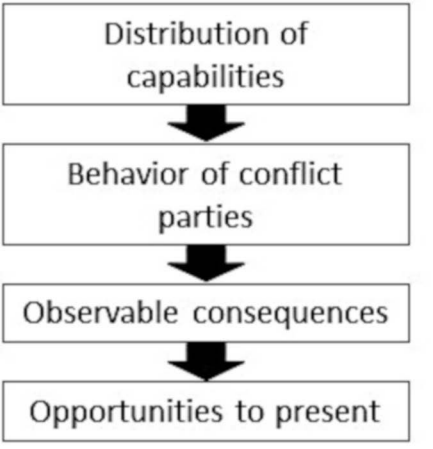
35 Studying tweets from journalists about the war in Ukraine, Ojala et al. observe four roles that can be performed by war correspondents: (1) disseminators, who disseminate first-hand observations, provide news updates from the conflict and emphasize the importance of eyewitnessing, (2) interpreters, who share views and opinions providing interpretations for the events of the conflict, (3) advocates, who aim to raise awareness for particular aspects of the conflict and to disqualify (allegedly) false claims and fake news, and (4) community-builders, who share personal experiences from their fieldwork in order to increase the journalistic transparency and to build connections with fellow journalists (Ojala et al. 2018).

36 The negative consequences of revealed photo manipulation and the subsequent credibility loss have been illustrated by Jitendra and Rohita Sharma, using the example of photojournalism (Sharma & Sharma 2017).

3.4.2.2 How the distribution of capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present of the conflict parties – General pattern and different forms of capabilities

As they cannot, as discussed in the previous section, simply make up the events they feature in their external communication without risking to harm their credibility, conflict parties rely on the opportunities to present that are generated by the asymmetric structure of the conflict: The distribution of capabilities between the conflict parties shapes the behavior of the conflict parties. The behavior of the conflict parties, in turn, has consequences that are visible for third-party audiences. What is observable about the conflict (and what is not observable), in turn, determines which opportunities to present the different conflict parties involved in the conflict have:

Figure 6: Overview – How the distribution of capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties



This general pattern can be expected to be present in all major dimensions of the conflict: The asymmetric distribution of military capabilities makes the conflict parties choose military strategies in a way that yields more opportunities to present for using shaming for the underdogs than for the topdogs. Having more economic & financial capabilities and social/institutional capabilities, in contrast, provides more particularly good opportunities to present for the use of branding for the topdogs than for the underdogs (cf. overview in figure 7).

Figure 7: Overview – Distribution of different types of capabilities and resulting opportunities to present

The following sections discuss more in detail how the distributions of military (section 3.4.2.3.), respectively economic & financial (section 3.4.2.4.), respectively social/institutional capabilities (section 3.4.2.5.) specifically shape the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts.

3.4.2.3 The impact of the distribution of military capabilities on the opportunities to present – The nexus between battlefield and communication

Section 3.4.2.3. discusses how and which opportunities to present are shaped by the distribution of military capabilities: The distribution of military capabilities shapes the selection of combat strategies of the conflict parties. Which combat strategies are selected by the conflict parties, in turn, determines what is observable about the conflict. What is observable about the conflict, thus finally, constitutes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties for using shaming (a visual overview of how the distribution of military capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts can be found in figure 8):

1. The conflict parties adapt their *combat strategies* to the conditions provided by the asymmetric distribution of capabilities. Having a lot of capabilities, topdogs have a powerful military and a low willingness to sacrifice. Consequently, topdogs tend to select a combat strategy that minimizes the risk of civilian fatalities on their own side and embrace the risk of collateral damage on the opponent side. Having only few capabilities, underdogs, in contrast, rely on a political victory and their dissatisfied populations demonstrate a higher will-

ingness to sacrifice. Consequently, they choose a combat strategy that embraces the risk of collateral damage on their own side, which has the potential to harm their opponent politically, and avoid forms of attack that might alienate potential supporters abroad. Furthermore, having a lot of military capabilities makes the topdogs powerful enough to control territory claimed and partially also populated by a population identifying itself with the opponent and to effectively exert a monopoly of violence, allowing a more centralized structure.

2. The selection of combat strategies, in turn, determines *what is observable of the conflict*: Most notably, the selected combat strategies tend to cause many more fatalities and damage on the underdog side and among these fatalities especially many civilian fatalities on their side. Furthermore, the acts of the topdogs' violence tend to be more clearly attributable than the acts of violence of underdogs. Finally, as only topdogs have control over territory populated by a population that identifies itself with the opponent; only the underdog side is affected by practices of occupation and blockading.
3. Consequently, as the mentioned acts of violence and occupation are particularly promising themes for shaming, the pictures and stories from the observable events of the conflict offer more promising shaming opportunities for the underdogs.

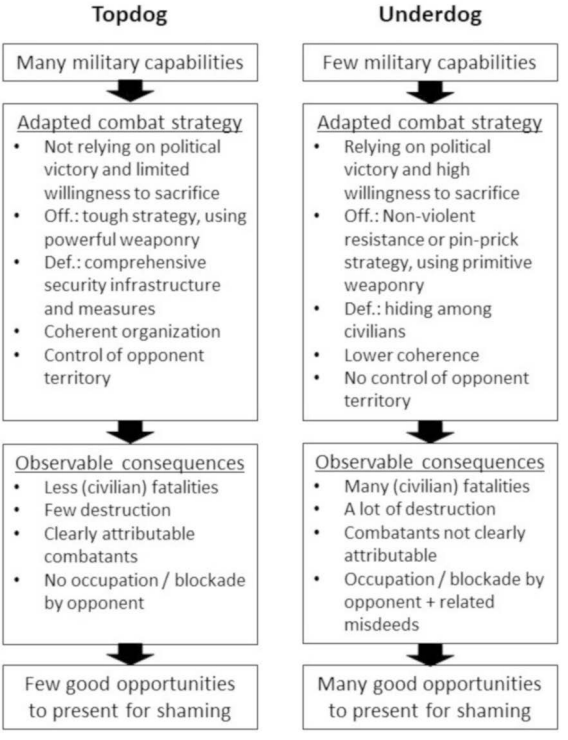
Characteristics of the typical combat strategies in asymmetric conflicts

The asymmetric distribution of military capabilities amongst the conflict parties shapes different combat strategies of the different conflict parties:

Strategic options to win and willingness to sacrifice: Topdogs have more military capabilities by far. They can afford, for example, expensive military equipment, including aircraft, marine forces and heavy weaponry (cf. section 3.2.2.2.). Underdogs, in contrast, have far fewer military capabilities. They cannot afford, and procure, advanced weaponry to the same extent and have to use comparatively simple weaponry. This clear military superiority gives topdogs the option to contain their opponents in the asymmetric conflicts by force, even though politically such measures are not unproblematic, as they are often perceived negatively by the international public and the international community. Underdogs, being militarily far less powerful, in contrast, do not have any realistic chance to score a military victory. Consequently, unlike topdogs, they purely rely on the possibility of a political victory (Mack 1975: 177).

Furthermore, the asymmetric distribution of capabilities influences the willingness within the population of the conflict parties to sacrifice as well: The sup-

Figure 8: Overview – How the distribution of military capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts



porters of the underdog side, being very dissatisfied with the status quo (cf. section 3.3.1.), are more willing to make sacrifices made in the form of "freedom" and "resistance" fighting, these tend to be more widely accepted and even glorified as "martyrdom" (cf. also Ayalon & Jenkins 2014: 3).[37] On the topdog side, being comparatively satisfied with the status quo (cf. section 3.3.1.) and being the more powerful side with strong military options, the willingness within the population to sacrifice tends to be very low (cf. e.g. Ryan 2002 on the example of the United States).[38]

37 Cf. also Mack (1975: 188) describing an asymmetry between underdogs and topdogs not only in terms of power but also concerning the willingness to suffer costs.

38 Similarly, Inglehart et al. observe a significantly lower "willingness to fight for one's country" in "high-opportunity societies" than in "low-opportunity societies" (Inglehart et al. 2015: 423).

Both the available strategic options to win and the willingness to sacrifice within one's own population influence also strongly the combat tactics of the conflict parties, as the following sections show.

Characteristics of the typical defensive combat strategies of underdogs and topdogs in asymmetric conflicts: Having much more military capabilities and, therefore, being much better equipped for conventional warfare, in a confrontation on an open battlefield topdogs could very likely defeat their underdog opponents easily. At the same time, the willingness to sacrifice is comparatively high among the supporters of the underdog and underdogs rely on political victories to make a change in the conflict, as their prospects for scoring a military victory against their topdog opponents are very low.

These conditions constituted by the asymmetric conflict structure make it attractive for the underdog to seek protection from attacks of the enemy topdog by hiding in densely populated civilian environments (Daase 1999: 100; Arasli 2011: 7; Mack 1975: 177).[39] On the one hand, hiding among civilians is possible for underdogs, as they have a comparatively high willingness to sacrifice, such a strategy is typically tolerated by the supporting civil population. On the other hand, such a strategy is attractive as underdogs rely on a political victory: An attack on a combatant target surrounded by civilian infrastructure and people would also cause collateral damage to the civilian infrastructure and people. Hiding among civilians, therefore, offers protection, as the presence of civilians that would be harmed imposes a moral and legal threshold for a potential attack (Münkler 2004: 180). In this way, civilians are abused as "human shields" (Sorgenfrei 2010). As, however, this threshold is no guarantee that a topdog will refrain from an attack, by hiding their military infrastructure and combatants among civilians, underdogs tend to deliberately embrace the possibility of collateral damage. Even the case where civilians are harmed or even killed as collateral damage, however, has a strategic value for the underdog, as attacks on the civilian population have a strong potential to cause outrage and to mobilize international pressure against the topdog opponent. As for an underdog a political victory is by far the most likely possibility to win in an

39 Besides hiding among civilians, underdogs can also try to hide their combat structures and combatants by taking refuge at sanctuaries with hard to access geography or in a sovereign neighbor country or by frequently changing their location to avoid being detected, dispersed in small groups or even as individual combatants (Daase 1999: 97, 99). As also the most remote sanctuaries are not undetectable and topdogs not necessarily shrink back from attacks across foreign borders, if the local population density is high enough, hiding among civilians remains even more promising for underdogs, considering that it offers additionally the possibility of a political backlash for their topdog opponents due to the collateral damage that an opponent attack would cause.

asymmetric conflict, it can even be tempting for underdogs to instrumentalize the strong potential civilian collateral damage and not only to embrace the possibility of collateral damage but even to provoke attacks leading to civilian collateral damage to cause outrage against the attacking opponent (Flibbert 2011; Münkler 2004: 180; Guiora 2004: 329).

In contrast, being comparatively satisfied with the status quo (cf. section 3.3.1.) and being the more powerful side with strong military options, the topdogs' willingness within the population to sacrifice tends to be very low (cf. e.g. Ryan 2002 on the example of the United States**)**. Furthermore, more than underdogs, topdogs (respectively especially in states with a democratic system their governments) are dependent on the support of their population or core constituencies and cohesion (Daase 1999: 216ff.). Therefore, in contrast to underdogs, the leadership of topdogs is likely to use any available option that could help to avoid unpopular losses on its own side. Moreover, underdogs have more financial capabilities and the military means for constructing, enforcing and maintaining advanced security measures making enemy attacks more difficult. For example, topdogs can enforce curfews and surveillance measures among the opponent population or build fortifications and "security walls". These measures can reduce the vulnerability of the topdogs against attack from the underdogs. Furthermore, being more powerful, topdogs also can limit the freedom of movement and possibly also other civil liberties of the opponent population (and possibly of their own population as well).[40]

Characteristics of the typical offensive combat strategies of underdogs and topdogs in asymmetric conflicts: The asymmetric distribution of capabilities also shapes the offensive combat tactics of the conflict parties: As they, having much fewer military capabilities, would be likely to fail badly to their topdog opponents with means of conventional warfare, underdogs tend to avoid open confrontations with their topdog opponents, instead employing guerilla and insurgency tactics (Arreguín-Toft 2001: 103f.; Lambach 2016; Daase 1999: 165, 173, Mack 1975: 176f.).[41] In their early stages for underdog actors terrorist tactics that are particularly gruesome and spectacular and that target civilians can be an option as well, as such tactics can help to attract attention and to be noticed domestically and internationally as a relevant player (Gilmour 2016). As underdogs, having only few military capabilities they, however, rely on a political victory and such a political victory is most

40 Cf. also the examples presented later in the empirical chapters of this book (section 7.3.1.).

41 Cf. also Boot (2013: Lesson #2) describing the guerilla strategy as the general strategy of the weak.

likely[42] to be achieved as a consequence of international pressure on the topdog,[43] underdogs, as soon as they have established themselves, tend to avoid forms of attacks that might alienate potential international supporters.[44] Relying on international support, they try to balance the trade-off between the domestic reputational gains of being able to present themselves domestically as a resolute force of resistance (Kydd & Walter 2006: 51, 76ff.) and potential reputational losses in the international public (Gilmour 2016; cf. also Daase 1999: 227) (as well as the risk of severe retaliations of the topdogs against the underdogs – cf. e.g. Toronto 2008). A form of guerrilla warfare, that allows such a trade-off and that, consequently, typically is used by underdogs, is to use a pinprick strategy (Mello 2014). Using a pinprick strategy means that the underdog tries to destabilize the topdog in minor, unexpected skirmishes and raids instead of having open confrontations with conventional fighting that would offer them no chance to win but which would result in severe casualties for them as the inferior conflict party. The targets of these attacks are, therefore, often symbolic, but sufficient enough to allow the underdog to present itself domestically as a resolute force of resistance. At the same time, pinprick attacks, classically, focus on military and security forces of the opponent as targets (cf. Heupel & Zangl 2004: 354 about the tactics of rebels in classical civil wars) and this way allows the underdog to avoid alienating the international public by harming civilians.

The adaptations of the underdogs also force the topdogs to adapt their offensive combat tactics: The topdogs are by far militarily superior. Having a lot of capabilities, for example, means that topdogs can afford, access and employ superior weaponry with strong firepower (cf. section 3.2.2.2.), while underdogs, in contrast, rely on very simple, cheap weapons, which they partially need to produce themselves (Arasli 2011: 6; on the challenge of acquiring weaponry cf. e.g. Lambach

42 A second major pathway to a political victory, supporting the pathway of international pressure, often described in the literature on asymmetric conflicts is the pathway of attrition: The underdog increases with its combat the costs for the topdog until the costs for the topdog exceed the benefits from upholding the fight and it withdraws (e.g. Daase 2009: 705; Mack 1975: 177, 185, 187). This additional dimension, however, is only relevant for some conflicts with an asymmetric conflict structure and not for all. While in colonial and secessionist conflicts and overseas interventions withdrawing is an option, as it would mean only a partial loss of power, in other conflicts with an asymmetric setting such as, for instance, civil wars withdrawal is not an option, as it would mean for the topdog a total loss of power (cf. also Kraemer 1971) (Mack, unlike this study, focuses rather on the former type of asymmetric conflict – Mack 1975: 191).

43 Cf. e.g. cf. Boot (2013: Lesson #5) arguing that the most important development for guerrilla warfare within the last two centuries has been the rising relevance of the international public opinion.

44 Münckler called the terrorist strategy, consequently, a "strategical deadlock" (Münckler 1992: 172 quoted by Daase 1999: 227).

2016). Unlike underdogs, due to their military superiority topdogs can be tempted to think that their chances are not limited to scoring a political victory, but also that a military victory might be possible. Topdogs, therefore, can choose to embrace the risk of civilian deaths and collateral damage on their opponents' side as a calculated risk to counter the unconventional warfare of their underdog opponents. Indeed, typically, topdogs in asymmetric conflicts perceive applying a tough approach against the enemy side as the only, or at least the most likely, successful counter-strategy to deal with unconventional warfare (Magnet 2017).[45] Disproportionate responses to attacks of the opponent underdogs can be used as a strategic, instrumental tool (Cohen 2010: 151f.; Flibbert 2011: 64ff., 70; Byman 2016; Lambach 2016; Sorgenfrei 2010). Historically, in civil wars, for example, often the more powerful state side used violence against civilians as a tool to drive a wedge between enemy combatants and the supportive civil population (Heupel & Zangl 2004: 354). Moreover, the low willingness to sacrifice within the civil population on the topdog side can create additional pressure on the topdog to apply a tough combat strategy instead of embracing the risk of civilian losses on their own side that might result from a more cautious approach against the opponent. Even if the topdog does not use violence against civilians intentionally and they even try to adopt measures to prevent civilian casualties by increasing the accuracy of its attacks, in practice, often still even targeted attacks cannot avoid civilian collateral damage completely; on the one hand, this is due to the fluent boundaries of the civil and the combatant environment created by the underdog, on the other hand, this is because of the particularly high strength of the own weapons (Flibbert 2011: 58f., 62; cf. also Clarke et al. 2015: 25ff.).

Coordination of combatants – Degree of cohesion and centralization: Moreover, the distribution of military (as well as social/institutional) capabilities affects the coordination of combatants of the conflict parties as well: Having many capabilities and being developed states, topdogs typically can effectively exert a monopoly of violence and have, for this reason, a more cohesive, centralized structure and tighter control of their combatants than underdogs (Daase 1999: 216ff.; cf. also Gallo & Marzano 2009: 3). In states, typically the monopoly of violence is exclusively exerted by the army and security forces, i.e., official bodies that are directly part of the state structures. On the underdog side, in contrast, attacks are typically not only conducted by the militias of the main opposition or "resistance" group but also often by "lone wolfs" or splinter groups and other smaller militias.[46]

45 Cf. also Arreguín-Toft (2001: 101f., 105) about "barbarism"; Guiora (2004: 329) on the topic of targeted killing and civilian collateral damage; Downes 2008: 37f. discussing the (perceived) strategic value of victimizing civilians.

46 The tendency that state actors (which are typically topdogs) have a higher cohesion than substate actors (which are typically underdogs) has already been observed by Christopher

Territorial control: Furthermore, the unequal distribution of capabilities is likely to result in significant differences concerning the territorial control of the different conflict parties: Having far superior military capabilities makes it easier for topdogs to control territory, often including territories with a population supporting the opponent conflict party. Underdogs, in contrast, have, if at all, limited territorial control and typically do not control territories with population identifying itself with the opponent side.[47]

Visible outcomes of the divergent combat strategies

Having chosen different combat strategies, what can also be observed is that the behavior of different conflict parties in the conflict differs: Most notably, the selected combat strategies tend to cause much more fatalities and damage on the underdog side than on the topdog side and among these fatalities there are particularly many civilian fatalities. Furthermore, the topdogs' acts of violence tend to be more clearly attributable than that of the underdogs. Finally, as only topdogs have control over territory populated by a population who identify themselves with the opponent, only the underdogs' side is affected by practices of occupation and similar acts of exertion of opponent power affecting the population and the territory linked with the underdog.

Observable damage and fatalities: As a result of the conflict parties' selected combat strategies, much more (especially much more civilian) fatalities can be observed on the underdog side than on the topdog side:

The defensive combat tactics of underdogs and the offensive combat tactics of topdogs both embrace the risk of civilian collateral damage within the civil population on the underdog side and a high number of fatalities on the underdog side in general. Consequently, it can be expected that the number of fatalities and especially the number of civilian fatalities on the underdog side are particularly high. In contrast, their security infrastructure and security measures can be expected to help topdogs decrease the number of fatalities and especially the number of civilian fatalities on their side. Also the selection of offensive combat tactics by the underdogs can be expected to contribute to keeping the number of civilian fatalities low

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Daase. As examples of substate actors he mentions the PLO and the PKK and their problems to centralize the control of violence within their own ranks, to agree on a joint strategy and to avoid split-offs (Daase 1999: 234). He, however, also observes a tendency that substate actors in the course of an asymmetric conflict aim to monopolize the control of violence and differentiate between a political and a military sphere, while for state actors in asymmetric the line between the political and the military sphere tends to become more and more blurred (Daase 1999: 234).

47 The nexus between military power and territorial control has been explored more in detail by de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca (2015: esp. 797).

on the topdog side in comparison to the number of fatalities on the underdog side, as underdogs tend to focus either on non-violent resistance or at least on abstaining from particularly harmful forms of attacks, focusing on military targets, as soon as they have established themselves.[48]

Spectacularity of the attacks and their damage: Furthermore, the typically modern and powerful weapons of topdogs and their damage are more spectacular than the typically comparatively primitive weapons used by the underdogs:

Topdogs can afford heavy weaponry. Heavy weaponry, such as modern artillery and airstrikes, is powerful and can cause serious harm to the opponent. Their powerfulness makes these weapons strong, however, they are also difficult to control and, therefore, their effect is potentially indiscriminate. If the opponent hides its combatants in a civilian environment, collateral damage when using heavy weaponry is likely and civilian losses and suffering are often hard to avoid (cf. e.g. Cordesman et al. 2007: 41ff. on the examples of the 2006 Lebanon War and the military operations of the United States and its allies in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan; cf. also Cordesman 2006: 10f. + 14). Often children, women and elderly people, i.e., groups that are typically perceived as particularly vulnerable and that are assumed to be not able to defend themselves, are affected by collateral damage (Carpenter 2016; Sorgenfrei 2010). The weaponry of underdogs, in contrast, is typically much less powerful and more primitive. While also primitive forms of attack, that are often used by underdogs, such as arson attacks, stabbings or booby traps, cause severe damage, they still remain less powerful than the weaponry topdogs can afford and, consequently, also their use and the caused damage remains less spectacular from a spectator's perspective.[49]

Recognizability and attributability of violence in the conflict: Additionally, not only more fatalities can be observed on the side of the underdog, the acts of violence of topdogs are also more easily attributable, and the combatants of topdogs tend to be easier to recognize than the ones of underdogs:

48 Cf. the sections "Characteristics of the typical defensive combat strategies of underdogs and topdogs in asymmetric conflicts" and "Characteristics of the typical offensive combat strategies of underdogs and topdogs in asymmetric conflicts" above.

49 This can already be illustrated well with the example of David's weapon in the tale of David and Goliath: His slingshot is nowadays typically portrayed as rather primitive and harmless. Military experts, however, point out that its effectiveness should not be underestimated. On the one hand, the use of the weapon was breaking with ancient conventions, giving David a surprise effect as well as higher agility (ORF 08.04.2017). On the other hand, experts point out that slingshots are deadly weapons, as they make a high acceleration of projectiles possible (Pennsylvania State University 2014).

A part of the underdogs' combat strategy is, as argued above, to hide among the civil population. To make it easier to hide often their combatants do not wear uniforms or other marks identifying them as combatants, which makes it more difficult to distinguish them from civilians and blurs the boundaries between civilians and combatants even further (Münkler 2004: 180). The military and security forces on the topdog side, in contrast, typically wear uniforms and symbols clearly marking them as combatants and, therefore, from the perspective of the humanitarian law as "legitimate" targets (Pfanner 2004; esp. 101f.). This makes them easily recognizable as combatants and makes it easy to distinguish them from civilians, whilst the combatant victims on the underdog side, being less easily recognizable, can be confused with civilians (Pfanner 2004: 123). Only the underdog side can, consequently, pretend that such combatant victims are civilian victims.

Furthermore, often on the side of the underdog attacks are not only conducted by the militias of the main opposition or "resistance" group but also often by "lone wolfs" or splinter groups and/or other smaller militias. [50] These violent incidents are more difficult to directly link to the underdog itself as the main leading opposition or "resistance" group.[51] As topdogs, in contrast, have a bigger internal cohesion with a more centralized military structure and tighter control of combatants (Daase 1999: 216ff.), violence on the side of the topdog is mostly exerted by clearly recognizable forces of the regular army (marked by uniforms and other emblems) and, therefore, comparatively easily attributable to the topdog itself.[52] Consequently, unlike the underdog side, the topdog side has not the option to excuse[53] these acts of violence by denying its responsibility. The resulting pictures and stories can, therefore, indicate a clearly attributable perpetrator.

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50 Cf. the section "Coordination of combatants – Degree of cohesion and centralization" above.

51 The lack of control can be used as "excuse". "Excusing" describes according to Jetschke the communicative strategy of admitting the existence of norm violations but denying the responsibility, e.g. because the violations are carried out by non-state actors not directly controlled by the accused government (Jetschke & Liese 2013: 36-37; Jetschke 2011).

52 As pointed out already in section 3.3.3., for topdogs, as they are states, the expectations to comply with international norms are anyway already typically higher than for underdogs: As primary legal subjects of the international law and full members of the international community, for many international norms and contracts states are the primary addressees. The status of statehood, therefore, also is linked with particular obligations and expectations and as main creators of the international legal order states are also monitored by parts of the international public to control whether they comply with their own norms or not (Ayalon et al. 2014: 4; Daase 1999: 236ff.).

53 "Excusing" describes according to Jetschke the communicative strategy of admitting the existence of norm violations but denying the responsibility, e.g. because the violations are carried out by non-state actors not directly controlled by the accused government (Jetschke & Liese 2013: 36-37; Jetschke 2011).

Observable implications of occupation: There are further consequences of the conflict parties' behavior, which may be observable for external audiences, such as the occupation and many of its implications:

As typically it is the topdog side who has control over territory populated by population identifying themselves with the opponent, it is only the underdog side who can be observed as the side suffering from occupation, meaning that it is only the topdog side who can be observed as occupying force. Moreover, controlling opponent population also requires the governance of the (possibly hostile) population. Such an exertion of power to control, however, also creates a risk of potential power abuses (cf. e.g. Manekin 2013). Consequently, there is a high chance that besides the occupation itself corresponding misdeeds of the combatants of the topdog side can also be observed.

Resulting opportunities to present

The observable implications of the conflict parties' combat strategies, that have been discussed in the last paragraphs, offer more particularly promising opportunities to present for the use of shaming for the underdogs' side than for the topdogs' side:

As discussed in section 2.2.1., pictures and stories that are particularly promising for shaming are, on the one hand, pictures and stories representing particularly extreme acts of physical violence and, on the other hand, pictures and stories representing structural violence and disadvantages that are perceived as injustices. Thereby, violence is perceived as particularly extreme, when (a) the damage is particularly large scale and the number of human casualties is particularly high (cf. also Clarke et al. 2015: 25ff.), (b) if the action causing the damage and casualties is clearly attributable to the shamed conflict party and (c) if the victims belong to a group that typically is perceived as particularly vulnerable (cf. also Münkler 2005: 90). As the considerations in the last section show, what is observable about asymmetric conflicts, is that underdogs tend to have more pictures and stories fulfilling these criteria than topdogs:

1. Suffering from many more fatalities, including civilian fatalities in particular, the underdogs have more opportunities to produce and circulate pictures and stories about suffering from extreme acts of violence at the hands of the opponent.
2. The modern weaponry of the topdogs is more spectacular than the comparatively primitive weaponry of the underdogs. The firepower of the weaponry of the topdogs and the damage they can cause is bigger than the firepower and the damage the underdogs' weaponry can cause.

3. Furthermore, the topdogs' acts of violence tend to be more easily recognizable and attributable than the ones of the underdogs, making the topdogs an easy target for shaming.
4. Only underdogs suffer from occupation, their opponents' occupation policies and misdeeds of topdog combatants in the context of the occupation, all actions that are typically perceived as unjust. Only underdogs, consequently, can use corresponding pictures and stories to shame their opponents.

Consequently, what can be observed about the conflict offers particularly many opportunities to produce and disseminate pictures and stories that are particularly promising to be used as a means of shaming the opponent by the underdogs. For the topdogs, in contrast, only comparatively few corresponding pictures and stories are available. Underdogs have, therefore, better opportunities to present to use shaming than topdogs.

3.4.2.4 The impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities on the opportunities to present

Like the distribution of military capabilities, the distribution of economic & financial capabilities also shapes divergent opportunities to present: The distribution of economic & financial capabilities reflects how well a conflict party performs economically and how much it can invest in prestigious projects. Having more economic & financial capabilities, topdogs can afford to invest in a "hearts and minds strategy" encompassing political, economic and social measures aiming at improving the actor's image (Daase 1999: 226) and they can, for example, spend more money on the development of high-tech products, building new architectural landmarks, arranging high-profile sports events, encouraging cultural diplomacy and exchanges with countries abroad, extravagant cultural projects and art performances and donations for aid and development.[54] The results of the economic performance and such investments are also observable for third-party audiences: Having a bigger economy, topdogs are more attractive as potential economic partners than underdogs and they have more prestigious projects they can show off. Both the economic attractiveness and the prestigious projects offer very promising pictures and stories for branding: As discussed in section 2.2.2., pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding are (a) pictures or stories that

54 Having more economic & financial capabilities means also that topdogs have more resources that are potentially available for the production of social media content. Therefore, they can afford a high gloss production of their media contents, while underdogs often need to draw on less high gloss content or even content produced by others. On the other hand, the "street credibility" of the comparative stylistic simplicity of low-cost production posts can also be perceived as authentic.

feature something that makes it easy for the target audience to identify itself with the communicating actor (Percy & Rossiter 1992: 271),[55] (b) pictures or stories that credibly signal the target audience a significant potential benefit for itself (cf. also the basic concept of "profit motive" in economic studies, e.g. Lux 2003), or (c) pictures or stories that feature something that stands out from the average and is particularly prestigious or is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative (cf. also Schultz 2007: 191ff.; e.g. Luhmann 1996: 58f.; Galtung & Ruge 1965: 82f.).[56] As the considerations made above show the economic actions of the con-

55 Cf. also Galtung & Ruge 1965: 81 ff.; Luhmann 1996: 60f.; the concept of "brand personality" in marketing research, e.g. described by Aaker 1997.

56 Indeed, corresponding criteria are used as selection criteria in the social media work of conflict parties, as can be, for example, shown for the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine, which is later going to be examined as a case study: Being aware of the "information overload" (Latar et al. 2010: 64f.; cf. also Dave Sharma, Australian ambassador to Israel, in Times of Israel 20.09.2016) in the modern digitalized society and media landscape, the conflict parties select only content for their social media messages which they expect to be perceived by their target audience as relevant and interesting. With spreading information that is non-relevant for the target audience, they would risk losing the attention of their target audience. The staff in the Israeli Government Press Office for example argues: "We don't like to spread the useless or not interesting information because then we will be blocked and people will stop listening to us, so we need to be focused and we need to think if what we send has a true journalistic value" (Isr GPO1: 65). Therefore, the conflict parties want their social media messages to be relevant to the daily lives of their target audiences and to touch them personally. The spokesperson's unit of COGAT for example explains: "you want to touch the daily life of the people. Because this is the reason, why they will enter and respond" (Isr COGAT: 8). Similarly, also the staff of the spokesperson's unit of the IDF emphasizes the importance of the content of the pictures and stories they select to be "appealing" and "relatable" to the target audience (Isr IDF: 63, 119). Moreover, messages are selected that are expected to be perceived by the target audience as something with an added value for itself. The staff of the spokesperson's unit of COGAT argues for example: "I think now it is the trend to give added value to the custumer. And if you need to give added value to the custumer, you do not push the product in his face. You give him the other information that he can use by using your product. And I think all the media are using that now. We should not just say COGAT, COGAT, COGAT. We need to say COGAT but also say that we are proud of something else. We are referring to another situation" (Isr COGAT: 8; cf. also the similar argumentation in Avraham 2009: 210). Furthermore, a focus on superlatives and the extraordinary can be observed in the social media work of the conflict parties. The staff of the Israeli Government Press Office, for example, gives as an example of an interesting story the story of an Israeli who was the oldest man alive in the world and additionally also a Holocaust survivor: "So for instance, the oldest man alive today in the world is called Yisrael Kristal. He lives in Haifa. That's north of Israel. He was born in September 1903, and what's super interesting in him, it's not just the fact that he's Israeli, but it's the fact that he's a Holocaust survivor from Auschwitz, and even has his number tattooed on his hand. So, this is an example of a story that we would be very interested in spreading out. We feel it sends very strong message and it's interesting. It's human, humane story, and that's something that we as I said a good example of what we

flict parties, therefore, offer many more pictures and stories fulfilling these criteria for the topdog side than in contrast to the underdog side:

1. Pictures and stories highlighting economic attractiveness can credibly signal the targeted audience a significant potential benefit for itself. Being economically particularly attractive, topdogs, consequently, can use this demonstration of their attractiveness to produce and disseminate corresponding pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding.
2. Particularly prestigious projects offer pictures and stories featuring something that stands out from the average and that is particularly prestigious or is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative. Being able to afford funding for more prestigious projects, topdogs can consequently also produce and disseminate more such pictures and stories.
3. The distribution of economic opportunities even gives topdogs more opportunities to produce pictures and stories showing encounters with people from the target audience, i.e., with particularly relatable content, as they can afford to invest more in cultural diplomacy.

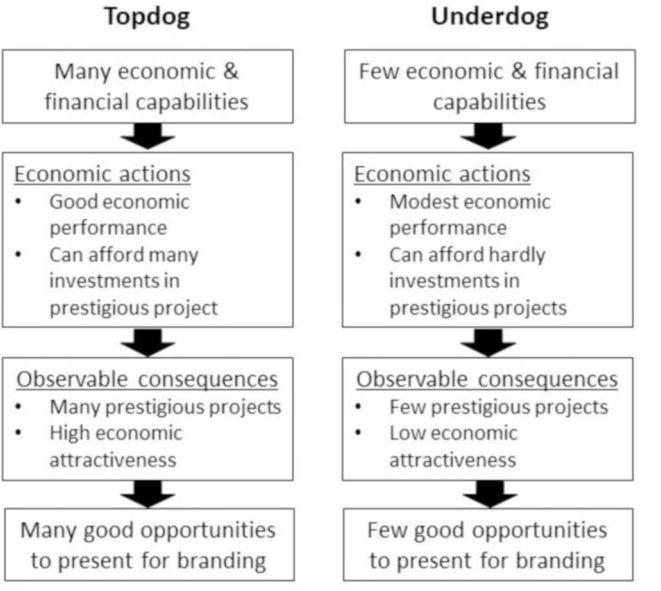
Consequently, the observable consequences of the economic actions of the conflict parties shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure offer more opportunities to produce and disseminate pictures and stories that are particularly promising for the use of branding for topdogs than for underdogs. Topdogs, conclusively, have much better opportunities to present for using branding than underdogs (a visual overview of how the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts can be found in figure 9).

3.4.2.5 The impact of the distribution of social/institutional capabilities on the opportunities to present

Like the distribution of military and economic & financial capabilities, the distribution of social/institutional capabilities also shapes divergent opportunities to present: The distribution of social/institutional capabilities influences how well developed the diplomatic relations of the conflict parties are and reflects how developed the statehoods of the conflict parties are. How high the social/institutional status of a conflict party is also made visible for third-party audiences: Topdogs, having a higher status, tend to have more top-level meetings with representatives

would put forward, even though it's not hardcore news. I can give many other examples, but it's not difficult to just open our Facebook page and see for yourself what kind of topics we are doing" (Isr GPO1: 65f.).

Figure 9: Overview – How the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts



and officials from foreign countries and more stable and developed state structures,[57] than underdogs. Both top-level international cooperation and being a stable, reliable partner offer very promising pictures and stories for branding: As discussed in section 2.2.2., pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding are (a) pictures or stories that feature something that makes it easy for the target audience to identify itself with the communicating actor (Percy & Rossiter 1992: 271),[58] (b) pictures or stories that credibly signal the target audience a significant potential benefit for itself (cf. also the basic concept of "profit motive" in

57 Topdogs unlike underdogs typically have already completed a state-building process. They have, therefore, state structures, as they exist and are appreciated also in the Western world: They are organized in a more cohesive way, typically having a more advanced political apparatus and bureaucracy (Daase 1999: 216ff. quoting also Mitchell 1991: 33) and the ability to exert the monopoly on violence (Daase 1999: 228ff.). These similarities can be used to point out closeness to the target audiences in foreign countries and to present oneself as a stable and reliable and, therefore, useful partner.

58 Cf. also Galtung & Ruge 1965: 81 ff.; Luhmann 1996: 60f.; the concept of "brand personality" in marketing research, e.g. described by Aaker 1997.

economic studies, e.g. Lux 2003), or (c) pictures or stories that feature something that stands out from the average and that is particularly prestigious or that is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative (cf. e.g. Luhmann 1996: 58f.; Galtung & Ruge 1965: 82f., cf. also Schultz 2007: 191ff.). As the considerations made above show, is that the observable consequence of the conflict parties' unequal social/institutional status, consequently, offer many more pictures and stories fulfilling these criteria for topdogs than for underdogs:

1. The more high-ranking the representatives and officials are with whom a conflict party can meet, the more the pictures or stories from these meetings stand out from the average coverage and the more prestigious they are perceived. As the representatives of topdogs typically have more of such meetings with full diplomatic honors than underdogs, topdogs can also produce and disseminate more such prestigious pictures and stories of such meetings.
2. The perception of being able to be a reliable, stable partner can credibly signal to the targeted audience a significant potential benefit for itself. Having this ability, topdogs, consequently, can use this framing to produce and disseminate corresponding pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding.

Consequently, the observable consequences of the social/institutional status of the conflict parties shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure offer more opportunities to produce and disseminate pictures and stories that are particularly promising to be used for branding oneself for topdogs rather than for underdogs. Topdogs, therefore, have much better opportunities to present for using branding than underdogs (a visual overview of how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts can be found in figure 10).

3.4.3 Using opportunities – Identifying the most successful strategies

Having discussed how the unequal distribution of capabilities can shape different opportunities to convince, and different opportunities to present, for the conflict parties, the following section examines how the resulting opportunities to convince and present shape the selection of strategies of external communication of conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts (cf. overview in figure 11):

As shown in the previous sections, topdogs tend to have more, and better, opportunities for using branding, while underdogs tend to have more, and better, opportunities to use shaming (cf. overview in table 4).

Figure 10: Overview – How the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts

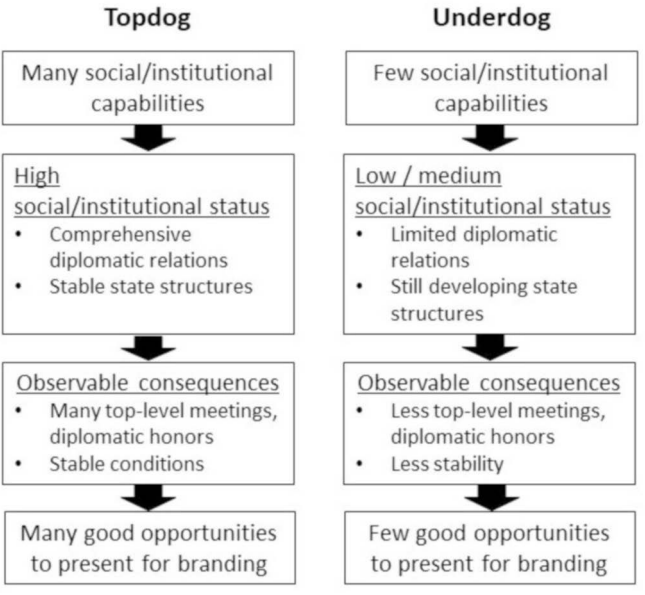


Figure 11: Overview – Step of the audience and the picturability pathway discussed in section 3.4.3. (highlighted in light grey)

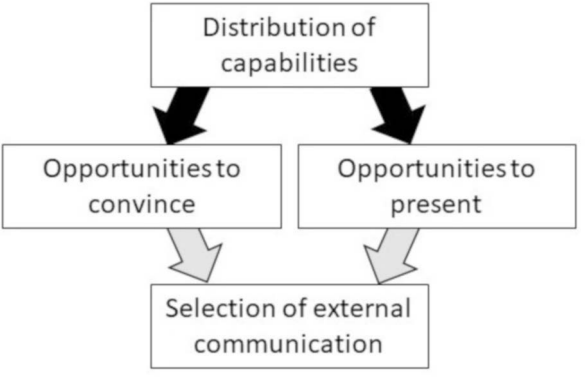


Table 4: Opportunities to use strategies of external communication successfully during asymmetric conflicts[59]

			Power position	
			Topdog (many capabilities)	Underdog (few capabilities)
Opportunities to use particular strategies	**Type of opp.**	**Type of strategy**		
	Opportunities to convince	with branding	good	slightly limited
		with shaming	limited	very good
	Opportunities to present	with branding	very good	limited
		with shaming	limited	very good
	Opportunities (overall)	with branding	very good	limited
		with shaming	limited	very good

Assuming the communicating conflict parties act strategically when planning and conducting their external communication, it can be expected that they will adapt their external communication not only according to their interests but also according to the opportunities provided by the conflict structure. Consequently, it can be expected that underdogs will choose a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication and topdogs a branding-dominated strategy of external communication, as these are the strategies of external communication that offer them the most advantages and the least disadvantages.[60]

59 Having a "victim image" can undermine the credibility of branding. Therefore, the opportunities to convince for the use of branding of the underdog are slightly limited.

60 A related field of literature, the campaigning literature, offers also some game-theoretical evidence that this logic can be even expected to be plausible when looking not only in general at branding and shaming as communication strategies, but also when looking more closely at the level of different types of pictures, stories and themes that can be used as references for branding and shaming: Most notably, Philipp Denter has observed the following trends when examining TV ads published by the opponent presidential candidates for their campaigns for the presidential elections in the United States in 2008: (I.) If no advantages for one of the opponents exist, the communication strategies of the competing opponents are likely to converge. (II.) If advantages exist, the communication strategies of the competing opponents are likely to diverge. (III.) The easier it is to draw the attention to a particular topic (i.e., the more effective is "issue priming"), the more the communication strategies diverge. (IV.) Only if a topic is particularly salient and perceived as particularly important by the targeted audience and if the disadvantage is not too big, it might be attractive for an actor to address the topic despite having a disadvantage (Denter 2013: 4). While the context of campaigning differs from the context of external communication during armed conflicts, like candidates during campaigns also conflict parties involved in asymmetric conflicts compete for the same target audience and have different advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, a similar behavior can be expected from strategically communicating actors in all kind of (dyadic) competitive settings, especially also, as argued already above, in armed conflicts: Having particularly strong pictures and stories for strong themes that can be used for shaming, therefore, underdogs can

Actors need to know about their opportunities to use particular strategies of external communication successfully in order to be able to adapt their external communication. Assuming that the communicating actors act strategically, however, this should not be a problem for them: On the one hand, the communicating conflict parties profit from their own experience. On the other hand, (especially for social media) some tools and indicators that allow them to measure the success are available:

Being at the center of the conflict and the discussions surrounding it, the communicating conflict parties can even develop a "feeling for the game" by collecting practical experience over time without a systematic, conscious reflection (Johansson 2017 quoting Bourdieu 1990: 66-68). Being confronted with reactions to the external communication, the staff in charge of the external communication receive feedback on whether using a particular type of content for its external communication works or not. Following a simple trial and error logic, then, the strategy of external communication can be adapted according to these experiences: The communication strategy is maintained, as long as it offers a sufficiently satisfying result, and it is changed, if the evaluation results show that the communication does not perform well. Assuming strategic thinking, in contrast, it is unlikely that the staff in charge of the external communication will instead merely stick to the dysfunctional routine and try to find excuses to keep the failing existing one.

When the external communication is published on a social media platform, there is a simple form to use in order to get a feeling for when the external communication is successful or not: simply read the comments and messages sent from followers. "Social media firestorms",[61] for example, can be interpreted as an extreme form of negative feedback. The appearance of assertive comments from the target group, in contrast, can be perceived as a sign of success. While assertive feedback (from within the target group) indicates success, negative feedback (from within the target group) indicates a failure and, therefore, underlines the need to change the strategy of external communication.

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be expected to focus on these strong shaming themes. In contrast, having particularly strong pictures and stories for strong themes that can be used for branding, topdogs are likely to focus in their external communication on these branding themes. This way they select the most promising pictures and stories and themes that are available for them. Additionally, focusing on one's advantages offers the opportunity to draw the attention to one's strengths and away from one's sore points (cf. also Denter 2013: 5). Only in exceptional cases, when it is not possible to draw the audience's attention sufficiently away from disadvantageous topics, strategically acting communicating conflict parties can be expected to be forced to deviate from this scheme (analogous to Denter 2013: 4). Section 3.5.2. discusses these exceptions.

61 In German-speaking countries the term "shitstorms" is more common. For a more differentiated discussion of the phenomenon of online firestorms cf. e.g. Pfeffer et al. 2014.

While, as mentioned above, neither sophisticated evaluation processes nor complicated measurements are required for identifying one's opportunities to communicate successfully, they can accelerate and refine the process of adapting to a promising strategy of external communication. In recent years both practitioners and scholars of public diplomacy have discussed possibilities of how to best evaluate the success of public diplomacy (e.g. Pamment 2014):

Social media platforms, in particular, offer accessible, and simple, indicators for measuring the success of the external communication published on the corresponding platforms. A simple indicator of the success of external communication on a social media platform would be to monitor the usage statistics of one's communication channels, for example. Online media, in particular, offers easily accessible usage statistics with plenty of simple indicators for evaluating the success of external communication.[62] It can be expected from strategically acting, success-oriented actors that these actors are critical with their own external communication and reflect it, by using simple forms of evaluation at least. A costlier but also comprehensive form of reflecting one's strengths and weaknesses, in contrast, is to conduct studies about one's image and the impact of particular narratives. For this research for example opinion polling and focus group interviews can be used.[63]

In conclusion, whilst no evaluation method can eliminate the element of subjectivity of an interpretation of the impact of communication completely as the thoughts of the audiences can be not accessed directly different evaluation methods are available for the conflict parties as means for them to get at least a rough impression about whether the effects of their external communication comply with what they have defined as their expectations.

3.5 Relations of the pathways, variation across time and possible alternative explanations

In the previous sections, the thesis has been introduced that the structure of the conflict is the key factor of the explanation determining the selection of these communication strategies during (asymmetric) conflicts. Three pathways have been identified explaining how the unequal distribution of capabilities shapes the selection of strategies of external communication of conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts. As section 3.5.1. is going to show, these pathways can be interpreted as mu-

62 Big social media platforms such as Facebook (link to Facebook Analytics: https://analytics.facebook.com/, accessed on 22.12.2020) and Twitter (link to Twitter Analytics: https://analytics.twitter.com/about, accessed on 22.12.2020) provide their own analysis tools for analyzing the usage statistics of one's social media channels.

63 Cf. also Banks 2011, pp. 33f.

tually reinforcing each other. Moreover, from the theoretical considerations made for the routine stages of asymmetric conflicts also conclusions for the selection of strategies of external communication during crisis moments of the conflict with a higher intensity can be drawn, as section 3.5.2. is going to show. Finally, in section 3.5.3. possible alternative theoretical explanations are introduced that might be able to explain a selection of strategies of external communication as predicted in section 3.2.1., too, and which, therefore, later need to be tested as well and be dismissed in order to provide additional evidence for the validity of the theoretical model introduced above.

3.5.1 Relations between the pathways

The last sections have shown that there is more than one pathway that could be identified as able to explain how the conflict structure in the form of the distribution of capabilities shapes the selection of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts. In total there are three pathways that could be derived theoretically: the prioritization pathway, the audience pathway and the picturability pathway. Each of them could sufficiently explain a distribution of communication strategies as expected in this study individually, not requiring the other two pathways. However, as the conflict structure can be expected to shape interests, opportunities to convince and opportunities to present at the same time, it is likely that all three pathways occur in parallel to each other and can be observed at the same time. This, however, is not a problem, as the underlying explanations for the pathways do not contradict each other and are not exclusive to each other. Quite the opposite, the three pathways should be interpreted as pathways that are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

3.5.2 Variation across time – Routine vs. crisis communication

Normally, due to the described conditions, it can be expected that topdogs will predominantly choose branding and underdogs predominantly choose shaming. During particularly intense stages of the conflict, however, it can be expected that topdogs choose shaming as their predominant strategy of external communication, as well. This is because these (short) stages of crisis provide different conditions than the stages of routine.[64] Nevertheless, from the theoretical considerations made for the selection of external communication by conflict parties during the routine stages of asymmetric conflicts, conclusions for the selection of strategies of exter-

64 The importance to differentiate between different conflict stages has been pointed out also by the INFOCORE research project (Frère & Wilen 2015).

nal communication by the conflict parties during crisis moments of the conflict, that are characterized by a higher conflict intensity, can also be drawn:

From the perspective of the audience pathway, branding is particularly effective, as it makes it possible for topdogs to not refer to the conflict. During the (typically comparatively short) stages of crisis, however, international attention is particularly high, meaning that very many people are talking about the crisis, also including very many people abroad. If the conflict is in the headlines of all of the media outlets, it will be difficult even for branding to distract audiences abroad from the conflict, thus making it hard for any conflict party, including the topdog, not to talk about the crisis situation everybody is talking about. Topdogs are, therefore, typically forced during such a crisis situation (unlike in a routine situation) to defend themselves, instead of using a strategy of actively shaping their own image or the image of their opponent like branding, they resort to, as an exception, shaming and justifications. From the perspective of the prioritization pathway, moreover, as the potential harm caused by not reacting to the events of the conflict during the particularly intense stages is higher than usual, it can be expected that it becomes a higher priority also for topdogs to react to the conflict. From the perspective of the picturability pathway, an additional explanation for the outliners is that during crisis stages typically the topdog also suffers from more fatalities and civilian suffering and, therefore, has more particularly promising pictures for shaming than usual.

Table 5: Overview – Expected predominant strategies of external communication of conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts (2x2 table)

Type of actor / Type of conflict stage	**Routine**	**Crisis**
Topdog	Branding	Shaming
Underdog	Shaming	Shaming

3.5.3 Alternative explanations

Besides the theoretical model introduced above two other alternative theoretical explanations might be able to explain a selection of strategies of external communication as predicted in section 3.2.1. They are, therefore, introduced in the following two sections and later (in section 8.2) they are tested as well, as it would further

strengthen the plausibility of the theoretical model introduced above, if it should be possible to dismiss them.

3.5.3.1 External communication as a dysfunctional relict from the actors' history

A first possible alternative explanation of the outcome that has been predicted for the empirical analysis for the selection of strategies of external communication (topdog selects mostly branding, underdog mostly shaming) is that the expression of the identity of the individual communicating actors resulting from the individual history of each actor and conflict has a bigger impact on the selection of communication strategies than strategic considerations. Indeed, this alternative explanation has been formulated, most prominently by Ron Schleifer for the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine: Schleifer argues that it is not the structure of the conflict that shapes the Israeli communication but that the roots of Israeli "hasbara"[65] lay deep in the Jewish history. According to this explanation, the modern Israeli strategy of external communication is a relict shaped by the historical experience of pressure toward Jewish communities across the Jewish history (Schleifer 2003: 123ff.), which is according to Schleifer dysfunctional, as it is from his point of view too "benign" (Schleifer 2003: 145).

3.5.3.2 External communication as a result of nonreflective diffusion of typical activism respectively marketing practices

Another group of theoretical approaches emphasizes that actors can adopt practices not only because of (rationalizing) strategic decisions or due to being influenced by their domestic culture but also because of the (not necessarily reflective) international diffusion of practices (cf. e.g. Strang & Meyer 1993: 487ff.). Relations between actors can lead to assimilation of practices by mirroring each other's practices (Strang & Meyer 1993: 488, 500 about relational models and faithful copying). In particularly fast practices can diffuse, if they are based on a theory (Strang & Meyer 1993: 492ff.). In the case of practices of external communication, this could be ideas or "theories" about how quality communication practices should look like, perceived as generalizable "best practice" or as general expectation.[66]

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65 "Hasbara" can be translated roughly with the English term "explain". It is the Hebrew term for "external communication". Today the Israeli practitioners rather tend to prefer the term "public diplomacy" instead, as they consider the early Hasbara efforts as too defensive (Isr MFA2: 57, 48; cf. also Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2006: 735).

66 Indeed, evaluating public diplomacy practices and identifying best practices is, for example, a goal of many contributions from the field of public diplomacy (cf. e.g. Banks 2011). Cf. also Witt & Miska 2018, mentioning the concept of "perceived best practices" (Witt & Miska 2018: 5, 20).

Depending on their social context different communities produce different theories.[67] Depending on to which community an actor is attached, actors might, therefore, adopt different communication practices. Topdogs, as states, have different relations than underdogs as non-states (cf. section 3.2.2.2. on social/institutional capabilities). The former tend to interact a lot with other administrations, armies of other states and with Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) (cf. section 3.2.2.2. on social/institutional capabilities), the latter with activists and international human rights NGOs (cf. e.g. Risse 2002: 3). The former group, as also the public diplomacy literature points out has been influenced strongly by ideas from marketing and PR research (Gilboa 2008: 65ff.; Signitzer & Coombs 1992). Activism and the communication of activists, in contrast, have been typically treated as a different subject than the public diplomacy of states (e.g. as part of the human rights diffusion literature, e.g. Risse et al. 1999). That topdogs choose branding, while underdogs choose shaming could theoretically, therefore, also be a consequence that the topdogs belong to the former group, the marketing and diplomacy community, with its own theories about best practices of external communication and underdogs belong to the latter group, the activist community, with distinct best practices of external communication. Indeed, e.g. the literature on norm diffusion characterizes shaming as the strategy of the weak side and international NGOs (cf. e.g. Risse et al. 1999: 27, 138; Hafner-Burton 2008: 689ff.).

67 Strange and Meyer explain that different expert communities construct different theories for different populations (cf. also Strang & Meyer 1993: 493ff. & 495ff., introducing the concepts of theorists and populations).

4. Case selection, research design & methodology

4.1 The case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine

In order to test the assumptions made in the theoretical chapter, and so as to reconstruct the selection process of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts, an in-depth case study has been conducted. In this chapter, first, the selected case for the case study, i.e., the conflict in Israel and Palestine, and the reasons for the selection are introduced (section 4.1.). Then, the research design and methodology of the case-study are explained: The empirical analysis of this study encompasses two parts: The first part, for which the research design and methodology are introduced in section 4.2., aims to identify the conflict parties' strategies of external communication used in the conflict in Israel and Palestine. This has been done in order to answer the first research question: *Which strategies of external communication do the conflict parties choose for their external communication?* The second part, for which the research design and methodology are introduced in section 4.3., then, aims to explain the selection of the strategies identified in the first part in order to answer the second research question: *What shapes the selection of communication strategies of conflict parties?*

4.1.1 The conflict in Israel and Palestine – Reasons for the case selection

For testing the assumptions made in the theoretical chapter and in order to reconstruct the selection process of external communication strategies used during asymmetric conflicts the conflict in Israel and Palestine has been selected as an exemplary case for the empirical analysis. More specifically, the analysis focuses on the most recent stage of the conflict: the time onwards from which social media has been used by the conflict parties as an arena for their external communication. At this recent stage[1] of the conflict, the focus of attention is on the struggle between

1 In the past, the general focus of attention in the context of the conflict in Israel and Palestine was on other conflict constellations. In the 1960s, for example, Israel's conflict with its Arab neighboring states was in the focus (Rettig 2018: 19; Commentary Magazine 10/2009).

Israel and the Palestinians (or more specifically, the major entities representing them). The important conflict parties are consequently:

Israel: The Israeli side is represented by the State of Israel, which declared its independence in 1948 and which was recognized as a full member of the United Nations in 1949. Since the Six-Day War in 1967, the State of Israel and its army control large parts of the so-called West Bank (Daase 1999: 159-165).

PLO & PNA: The first important conflict parties on the Palestinian side are the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian National Authority. The PLO has been able since the 1960s to establish themselves as the domestically as well as internationally recognized (or at least tolerated) representation of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was established later following the negotiations for the Oslo Accords in 1994. Following the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority controls the urban Palestinian territories in the West Bank.[2] While the PLO & the PNA are separate structures, they are both intertwined and controlled by the political party and resistance movement Fatah. While other groups are also represented in the PLO & the PNA, Fatah has been the dominant faction in these structures since the establishment of the PLO & the PNA.

Hamas: Since 1987/1988 a second actor, Hamas, has emerged on the Palestinian side as a central conflict party. Hamas presented itself as an alternative to Fatah, which was deemed corrupt, and attracted attention and support by parts of the population. They achieved this by offering a more radical approach to end the occupation than Fatah's moderate and diplomatic but slow approach: conducting terrorist attacks against Israel. This way Hamas could win in 2006 the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. The election result caused violent clashes between Hamas and Fatah resulting in Fatah maintaining control over the West Bank and Hamas taking control over the Gaza Strip, from which all Israeli settlers had been removed unilaterally by Israel in 2005 (Brown 2012: 1; Shlaim 2009).[3]

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2 The Oslo Accords grant the PNA the powers and responsibilities for internal security and public order in the so-called "Area A" (Oslo II Accord XI 3a, XIII 1), encompassing most major cities populated by Palestinians in the West Bank (about 18 % of the West Bank territory and 55% of its Palestinian population (European Parliament 2013: 4)). Additionally, the treaty grants the PNA the civil control in "Area B", while the security control is supposed to be a joint responsibility of the Israeli and the Palestinian side (Oslo II Accord XI 3b, XIII 2). "Area B" encompasses most rural communities populated by Palestinians in the West Bank (about 20 % of the West Bank territory and 41% of its Palestinian population (European Parliament 2013: 4)). "Area C", in contrast, has remained under full control of the Israeli side, both concerning civil and security affairs (Oslo II Accord XI 3c, XVII 2). "Area C" is only sparsely populated by Palestinians (about 62 % of the West Bank territory and about 150,000 of the West Bank's 2.5 million Palestinians (European Parliament 2013: 4)).

3 On the Palestinian side, furthermore, some minor factions such as, for instance, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) exist that are not controlled directly by the PLO & the PNA or Hamas.

Focusing on the conflict in Israel and Palestine as an example of an asymmetric conflict offers a series of advantages:

A typical case of an asymmetric conflict structure: First of all, so as to observe the potential impact of the asymmetric character of the conflict structure, it is necessary to select a conflict in which this character is clearly present. Section 4.1.2. examines the distribution of (military, economic & financial and social/institutional) capabilities among the conflict parties in the case of conflict in Israel and Palestine in detail, demonstrating that the conflict in its present stage can be deemed a typical case of a conflict with an asymmetric conflict structure (as defined in chapter 3), as the distribution of capabilities amongst the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine is extremely unequal.[4]

The asymmetric constellation as the only dominant conflict line: Many modern conflicts do not have a dyadic character in which one single conflict line is dominant, but they have two or more overlapping conflict lines of similar importance. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Northern Syria, for example, do not only fight with the Turkish army and militias supported by Turkey but also with Daesh. Whilst the sub-conflict with Turkey has asymmetric characteristics,[5] the sub-conflict with Daesh, does not fulfill the ideal-typical characteristics of an asymmetric conflict structure (e.g. none of the conflict parties is a recognized state and, furthermore, the military power ratio between the conflict parties has been less clearly unequal during most of the conflict as can typically be seen in asymmetric conflicts). Both conflict lines are, however, more or less equally important for the perception of the SDF abroad. It can, therefore, be expected that the structures of both conflict lines simultaneously influence the selection of a communication strategy of the SDF and in the end a mixed strategy can be observed, which is not only a result of the influence of the asymmetric conflict structure of the sub-conflict of the Syrian Kurds with Turkey but of the more symmetric structure of the sub-conflict with Daesh as well. In such cases, however, the influence of the structure of

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As they are rather small factions and they hardly engage in external communication, this study focusses only on the main factions.

4 Besides the asymmetric distribution of capabilities, additionally, also two other characteristics of asymmetric conflicts mentioned frequently in the literature on asymmetric conflicts can be observed: (1) divergent interests of the conflict parties shaped by the influence of the unequal distribution of capabilities and (2) different typical military and political strategies the conflict parties use to deal with the asymmetric distribution of capabilities, differing between topdogs and underdogs. These characteristics resulting from the unequal distribution of capabilities are described later theoretically in sections 3.3. and 3.4.2. as part of the description of the different pathways explaining the selection of strategies of external communication by the conflict parties and are shown empirically in chapters 6 and 7 as part of the empirical analysis of the different pathways.

5 Cf. for comparison the IISS indicators describing the power capabilities of Turkey (IISS 2017: 166ff.) and the YPG (IISS 2017: 406f.).

the asymmetric sub-conflict on the selection of external communication strategies overlap with the structure of a non-asymmetric conflict, what makes it more difficult to identify what has been the influence of the asymmetric conflict structure. In order to only evaluate the impact of the asymmetric conflict structure and no other influences, a case should therefore be selected in which only one – asymmetric – conflict line is dominant and where other overlapping conflict lines with similar dominance and with a conflict structure with other characteristics do not exist. This way the interference of the impact of a second conflict structure with non-asymmetric characteristics on the selection of the strategies of external communication of the conflict parties can be avoided; the conflict in Israel and Palestine is such a conflict. It only has one clearly dominant and asymmetric conflict-line – that of the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians.[6]

Controllable communication context and equal target audiences: Moreover, in order to be able to assess the impact of the asymmetric conflict structure it is also important to select a case that allows control for the communication context. As pointed out in section 2.1. in the conceptualization chapter, different communication constellations provide different conditions for communication and its perception. As strategically thinking actors can be expected to adapt their external communication toward different communication contexts and target audiences, this has an impact on the selection of communication strategies as well. Therefore, so as to understand why a conflict party selects a particular communication strategy, it is important to examine similar types of communication, and that, for example, external communication is not compared to communication directed to domestic audiences. This, however, distorts the analysis, as for different types of communication different conditions apply (domestic audiences can, for instance, be expected to react differently than foreign audiences). In order to avoid mixing up different types of communication in section 2.1. it was decided to focus on a single communication context: external communication. The data used for the empirical analysis, therefore, should be clearly attributable to this type of communication. As section 4.2.1.2. shall show in detail, the conflict in Israel and Palestine provides such data.

A most-likely case for the strongest potential alternative explanation: Finally, the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine can even be considered a crucial case, as it can be considered a most-likely case for the strongest alternative explanation (cf. Levy 2008: 12f. on the logic of crucial case designs): As discussed in section 3.5.3.1., the strongest alternative explanation is that the selection of the conflict

6 Side-lines are the tensions with Iran and Hezbollah (from the Israeli perspective often depicted as Iranian proxy) and partially also tensions with Arab neighboring states. These side-lines, however, cannot overshadow the dominant conflict-line of the struggle between the State of Israel and the Palestinians.

parties' external communication strategies is that determined rather by the identities of the actors than by strategic considerations. If indeed the expression of the identity of the individual communicating actors resulting from the individual history of each actor and conflict should have a bigger impact on the selection of communication strategies than strategic considerations, then this should be particularly observable in the conflict in Israel and Palestine, as their conflict is one that has been triggering stronger emotional discussions than hardly any other conflict, as the conflict has a complex, decades-long history and is one that is placed in a setting that is perceived to be particularly important for many religions and denominations. Furthermore, it is one that is characterized by a population from a wide range of diverse cultural backgrounds. Against the backdrop of the strong presence of such strong identities, an influence of emotional and/or cultural acting that even overshadows strategic considerations in the process of the selection of strategies of external communication should be, therefore, particularly likely especially in this particular case.

4.1.2 The conflict in Israel and Palestine as a typical asymmetric conflict – Distribution of capabilities in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

Having briefly outlined the reasons for selecting the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine for the empirical analysis, the following sections shall further elaborate why the conflict in Israel can be considered an almost ideal-typical case of an asymmetric conflict: The conflict is characterized by a significantly disparate distribution of capabilities among the conflict parties: The State of Israel has by far more capabilities than both Hamas and the PLO & the PNA. This disparity, as the following sections show, can be observed for the distribution of military capabilities (section 4.1.2.1.), economic & financial capabilities (section 4.1.2.2.) and social/institutional capabilities (section 4.1.2.3.). The State of Israel is clearly a "topdog" in the asymmetric conflict, while Hamas and the PLO & the PNA are "underdogs":

4.1.2.1 Distribution of military capabilities

Possibly the most visible aspect of the inequality among the conflict parties is the disparate distribution of military capabilities amongst the State of Israel as topdog on the one side and Hamas and the PLO & the PNA as underdogs on the other side. This disparity is well-known, but becomes even more apparent, when looking at some of the key indicators for measuring military capabilities also used in the literature on asymmetric conflicts (cf. section 3.2.2.2.):

The military superiority already becomes apparent when comparing the manpower of the military and security forces of the conflict parties: The Israeli army (the Israeli Defense Forces – IDF) has a manpower of 176,500 active soldiers and a reserve of 465,000 women and men, making the IDF one of the biggest armies in

the world (IISS 2017: 382). Additionally, the State of Israel employs a border police unit of 8,000 members (IISS 2017: 382) and has, in general, a strong and heavily equipped civilian police apparatus. In contrast, the PNA employs in their National Security Force only about 10,000 men, controlling additionally a presidential security unit (3,000 men), some special forces (1,200 men), the Palestinian police (9,000 men), a preventative security unit (4,000 men) and a civil defence unit (1,000 men) (IISS 2017: 398f.). The ruling faction in the PLO & the PNA, Fatah, additionally has a paramilitary wing called Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades with a few hundred members.[7] Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, has by far fewer combatants than the State of Israel. Its paramilitary wing called Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades encompasses approximately 15,000-20,000 militants (IISS 2017: 399). Even when considering the existence of other minor militant groups such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and lone-wolf attackers as well, the State of Israel remains by far the conflict party with the stronger manpower.

When comparing the resources available for the military and security apparatus on both sides, an even larger contrast can be observed: In 2016 the State of Israel invested 38.3 billion US dollars into its military. This made the Israeli defense budget the 14th biggest defense budget of all states in the world (IISS 2017: 19). In 2016, the military expenditures of the State of Israel equaled 6.1% of its GDP,[8] which is more than the entire GDP of the Palestinian Territories.[9] Israel also has access to leading military technology and its military and security industry is one of the leading military and security industries worldwide. According to the SIPRI database in 2017 three of the leading top 50 arms-producing & military service companies were based in Israel.[10]

Consequently, the equipment of the Israeli military is by far superior as well. Unlike the Palestinian actors, the Israeli army has a strong air force, navy, high-tech military technology and even nuclear weapons. Israel is, for example, estimated to have at least 80 nuclear warheads (SIPRI 2018: 236), about 500 main battle tanks, 530 artillery vehicles, 5 submarines and 431 combat capable airplanes (IISS 2017: 383f.). In terms of conventional strength, therefore, the IDF is considered to be one of the most powerful armies in the world (O'Sullivan & Subramanian 2015: 41). The equipment of the PLO & the PNA, in contrast, is comparatively simple: The Oslo Accords limits the types of weapons the National Security Force of the

7 According to the US Department of State – Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (2012): Country Reports on Terrorism 2011 Report, chapter 6.

8 CIA World Factbook (20.06.2018): Country Report Israel.

9 The military expenditures of the State of Israel are about 1.44 times as high than the entire Palestinian GDP; calculation: 144.366% = ((317.748 billion USD * 6.1 %) / 13.426 billion USD), calculated based on World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, in current US dollars (World Bank 2018a) and based on IISS 2017 report.

10 According to the SIPRI Arms Industry Database (2016).

PNA, which had succeeded the Palestinian Liberation Army of the PLO (Pan 2005), is allowed to possess to small arms (Hunter & Jones 2006: 30). Though partially trained in Jordan and the USA, the unit is supposed to fulfill gendarmerie-like functions rather than those of an army[11] and it is often described as poorly funded and lacking efficiency (Brom 2008). Similarly, neither Hamas nor any other Palestinian paramilitary group can compete with the IDF in terms of military technology and equipment for conventional warfare: Hamas is estimated to have a yearly budget of about 700 million US dollars,[12] from which it spends an estimate of about 100 million US dollars on its military activities (Times of Israel 08.09.2016), a sum nowhere nearly as high the Israeli expenditures. Since the early 2000s Hamas has developed stronger, and increasingly sophisticated rocket-artillery capabilities, generally Hamas still relies on comparatively simple and inexpensive weaponry that is far from both the technological level and the destructiveness of the weaponry of their Israeli counterparts (IISS 2017: 398).

4.1.2.2 Distribution of economic & financial capabilities

Similarly, marked differences can be observed for the distribution of economic & financial capabilities. The classical indicators for economic strength show a tremendous advantage for the Israeli side:

In 2016 Israel had a total gross domestic product (GDP) of 317.748 billion US dollars[13] and a GDP of 37,180.85 US dollars per capita.[14] The West Bank and Gaza, in contrast, had in 2016 together a total GDP of 13.426 billion US dollars[15] and a GDP of 2,949.688 US dollars per capita.[16]

Israel is a member of the OECD and has a "very high" Human Development Index (HDI) value (UNDP 2016). The OECD assesses Israel's economy as strong, pointing out that Israel's strong GDP growth was above the OECD average as well as highlighting Israel's strong macroeconomic and fiscal performance (OECD 2018b). Israel's public debt is well below the OECD average and even further declining, with a low level of unemployment, which continues to fall as well (OECD 2018b). The backbone of Israel's economic strength is the high level of technological development and the diversity of Israel's industry, encompassing, for example, a strong

11 According to Brom 2008 and US Department of State – Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) (2018) – Country Report – West Bank.

12 According to Counter Extremism Project (2018) – Report on Hamas.

13 According to World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018a).

14 According to World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018b).

15 According to World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018a).

16 According to World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018b).

start-up culture and a high number of high-tech industries.[17] Furthermore, Israel profits from a comparatively well-developed infrastructure and a good global sales system. This way, for example, the international tourism expenditures in Israel were with 8.607 billion US dollars[18] more than 13 times higher than the expenditures in the Palestinian Territories (658 million US dollars[19]) in 2016.

The Palestinian economy, in contrast, is much weaker and more fragile,[20] with an HDI value of only "medium" (UNDP 2016). The life expectancy in Israel is almost 10 years higher than in Palestine (World Bank 2018c). Restrictions on the movement of people and goods (e.g. the blockade of Gaza, checkpoints and restrictions on imports and exports), as well as the destruction of infrastructure in the course of the conflict, have hampered the economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip[21] as well as the establishment of international trade relations.[22] Currently, neither international airports nor ports in the Palestinian Territories are in service, this has been the case since 2001 (Washington Post 11.08.2014). The Gaza Strip even lacks a reliable electricity supply.[23] Besides administration and agriculture, the Palestinian economy is dominated by retail and services, construction, manufacturing, mining and, to a smaller extent, by the ICT and financial sectors; they lack the high-tech and high-profit sectors as can be found in the Israeli economy (UNSCO 2017: 2; Office of the Quartet 2018). Additionally, the unemployment rates in the Palestinian Territories are high (19.6% in 2016 in the West Bank and far higher rates in the Gaza Strip).[24]

4.1.2.3 Distribution of social/institutional capabilities

Finally, notable differences can also be observed in the distribution of social/institutional capabilities for the different conflict parties: In this case, Israel also has more social/institutional capabilities than their opponents, both in regard to their formal recognition and the degree of development of their governance structures.

Most notably Israel is recognized, unlike the PLO & the PNA and Hamas, as a full member state of the United Nations. While the PNA has been able to join a series of international organizations and treaties, over the last years as the "State of Palestine" (Alashqar 2019), however, to date the status of full membership has been denied to them in the United Nations. Instead, the State of Palestine has only

17 CIA World Factbook (20.06.2018): Country Report Israel.
18 Calculated in current prices based on Knoema 2018a.
19 Calculated in current prices based on Knoema 2018b.
20 CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank.
21 The Gaza Strip suffers particularly strongly, as it has been hit by the conflict and destructions particularly strongly during the last years.
22 CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank; CIA World Factbook (03.12.2018): Country Report Gaza Strip; World Bank 2013.
23 CIA World Factbook (03.12.2018): Country Report Gaza Strip.
24 CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank.

been able to obtain the status of a "Non-member State Permanent Observer" (and this was only achieved in 2012 after a long struggle) (UN News 29.11.2012). While many states, in the meantime, have officially recognized the State of Palestine, it still lacks the (full) recognition of three out of five veto powers of the United Nations Security Council (of the governments of the United Kingdom, France and most notably of the United States) and most Western European States, most of the NATO members and other powerful states such as Japan and Australia.[25] The State of Israel, in contrast, is fully recognized by all of these particularly powerful states and by the other veto powers of the Security Council as well.[26] However, it must be acknowledged that several countries refuse to recognize Israel's statehood, predominantly states from the Arab world. Quantitatively, therefore, both conflict parties have a similarly high number of diplomatic relations. However, Israel is able to fund its representations more generously, giving it another advantage in relationship building. In conclusion, this institutional power constellation constitutes an advantageous position for Israel in comparison to the PLO & the PNA, even though, considering that the PLO & the PNA enjoy some formal recognition, on the one hand, and that some states refuse to recognize Israel, on the other hand, the degree of asymmetry is not as ideal-typical like for the distribution of military and economic & financial capabilities.

Even more clearly, however, is the disparity of the level of formal recognition between Hamas and Israel: Whilst the State of Israel, as mentioned, is a full member of the United Nations, the Hamas government, which controls the Gaza Strip, does not only lack international recognition, but the Hamas Movement is also designated by many states as a terror organization. Most notably, the United States[27] and the European Union[28] have deemed Hamas as a whole as a terror organization and have, therefore, imposed sanctions against the group.

The Israeli side is not only superior to the Palestinian side in terms of their formal recognition as a state, but also in terms of the degree of development of its governance structures. While Israel already declared its independence in 1948 and could since build up stable governance structures similar to those of other modern states, the state-building process on the Palestinian side has been delayed. Due to various reasons, it is still difficult for the Palestinian side to set up governance structures that fulfill the expectations that are expected from a modern state. Most importantly, the implications of the Israeli occupation and the domestic infighting between different Palestinian factions means that it remains (despite

25 Cf. State of Palestine – Mission to the United Nations 2018.
26 Cf. Jewish Virtual Library 2018.
27 US Department of State – Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism 2018.
28 Council of the European Union (27.01.2017): Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/154.

some progress made over the last years) difficult for the PNA to govern as government independently and efficiently within Palestine (Bouris & Kyris 2017: 763ff.; Panganiban 2015: 66ff.; Pitta 2018: 17ff.).[29]

4.1.3 The social media as a platform for external communication and the external communication infrastructure of the conflict parties

Having outlined the advantages of selecting the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine for the examination of the conflict parties' strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts and having shown what makes the conflict an almost ideal-typical example for a conflict with an asymmetric conflict structure, the following sections explain which type of data has been collected to examine the external communication of the different conflict parties in order to gain a representative impression of their external communication: The data used for examining the conflict parties' external communication in this study is the communication of the conflict parties on their most important official English-speaking social media channels. Focusing on examining data from social media offers a series of advantages:

Social media as an accessible platform for all conflict parties: The most important social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) are comparatively easy to access for all conflict parties. Unlike setting up the infrastructure required for traditional forms of mass media, setting up a simple social media channel does not require expensive equipment or infrastructure. In order to maintain a simple social media channel merely internet access and a mobile phone is sufficient (Evans 2016: 334; Kuntsman & Stein 2010; Al-Monitor 13.10.2015).[30] Moreover, the infrastructure required for social media is also less vulnerable to being interfered with by military violence. Whilst broadcasting stations are easy targets for military strikes, blocking and restricting internet access even is a by far more complicated endeavor.[31] Similarly, whilst heavy journalist camera equipment can be easily detected, the same cannot be said for video material shot and disseminated on smartphones which are nowadays privately owned by a large number of people (Evans 2016: 334; Kuntsman & Stein 2010; Al-Monitor 13.10.2015).[32] Besides the chance of getting access to larger audiences abroad social media, furthermore, offers the possibility of communicating directly, without any mediation or editorial revision, with potentially large audiences abroad. Unlike in traditional mass

29 Implicitly, even the PNA acknowledges these deficits respectively challenges in its National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 (State of Palestine PMO 2016 – National Policy Agenda 2017-2022).

30 Cf. also Hanson 2013: chapter "Questioning the Media".

31 Indeed, broadcasting stations are often strategic targets in violent clashes.

32 Cf. also Hanson 2013: chapter "Questioning the Media".

media, in social media actors can directly publish their content onto the various social media platforms. Not the editorial team of a newspaper nor a broadcaster determines whether a social media post is perceived as relevant, instead, this is done by the social media users themselves and they can, therefore, decide by their interactions whether this content is shown to a broad audience or not.[33] This way conflict parties can spread their messages without modifications, including messages that would not have been selected by editorial boards of traditional mass media channels, they are now only limited by the terms of service outlined by the social media platforms and the reactions toward their content from the social media users. This makes the social media attractive for all conflict parties, due to the comparatively low minimal requirements, particularly for underdogs that do not have access or cannot afford other channels of external communication. Consequently, all the central conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine have a strong presence in the social media: The State of Israel as well as the PLO & the PNA and Hamas.

Social media as a continuous and attributable source: A big advantage of using social media data is, moreover, that social media is a source that continuously provides data for the examination of the conflict parties' external communication: On most channels, almost daily posts are published. Social media data, therefore, is a source that allows the examination of trends and developments within the external communication and not just isolated incidents. All posts being collected together on one social media channel, furthermore, are clearly attributable to the entity operating it.

Social media as a central arena: While traditional forms of mass media such as television, radio and newspapers continue to play an important role and remain influential, in recent years, social media has become a new arena of ever-growing importance.[34]

4.2 Identifying strategies of external communication

The first part of the empirical study aims to identify the conflict parties' strategies of external communication in the conflict in Israel and Palestine in order to answer the first research question: *Which strategies of external communication do the conflict parties choose for their external communication?* The following sections explain,

33 In communication sciences this phenomenon is called „audience gatekeeping". Unlike in the "traditional gatekeeping" of the traditional mass media, not an editorial team decides what contents are distributed to a wider audience but the users (Kwon et al. 2009).

34 This trend is reflected in statistics measuring the daily time spent on different types of media (cf. e.g. GlobalWebIndex 2019: 6).

first, for which reasons which social media channels have been selected for the analysis (section 4.2.1.) and, then, the methods used to identify strategies of external communication in detail: To identify strategies of external communication one sample from each side of the conflict was coded manually in a quantifying qualitative content analysis (section 4.2.2.). Then, a series of robustness checks was conducted, including an automated quantitative content analysis for a more comprehensive data set (section 4.2.3.), as well as interviews with the staff in charge of the social media channels of the conflict parties (section 4.2.4.).[35] While the focus of the theory and analysis lies on the variation across actors, additionally variations across time and across different social media platforms were examined as additional robustness checks to ensure that the observed selection of strategies of external communication is not merely a unique distribution for a particular moment of time and/or on a particular social media platform.

4.2.1 Selection of social media channels

For both the quantifying qualitative content analysis and the automated quantitative analysis, it was necessary to decide which channels should be selected to collect the data for the analysis. Before explaining both methods, the following section, therefore, shall first explain the reasoning behind the selection of channels:

For the quantifying qualitative content analysis samples from the English-speaking Facebook channel of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) were selected, the former as an example for the Israeli side, the latter as an example for the Palestinian side. Furthermore, the selection can be considered to be a particularly hard test of the theoretical expectations formulated in the theory chapter: The former is the most followed official social media channel on the Israeli side, the latter the most followed one on the Palestinian side. Furthermore, the former is a channel of a military branch and the

35 While there is some exchange between the different branches and organizations of the PLO & the PNA, these exchanges are quite loosely (See answers on the corresponding question in the interviews with the branches and organizations of the State of Palestine / PNA / PLO, esp. Pal UN: 249f.). The exchange and cooperation between the different branches of the Israeli government are comparatively loosely, too. While a National Hasbara Headquarters was created (Molad 2012) and plans for coordination during times of emergency exist, the exchange during times of routine is only occasional and the margin of appreciation about the selection of strategies of external communication of the different branches is very high. The top-down political influence from policy-makers on the practitioners in charge of the social media work is low as well (Isr IDF: 26ff., 143ff.; Isr MFA2: 60; Isr GPO2: 117ff.; Isr COGAT: 72). This means the selection of strategies of external communication in the different branches is done comparatively independently from each other. If, nevertheless, the different branches of a conflict party choose the same strategy of external communication, therefore, this provides additional evidence for the validity of the corresponding theoretical argument.

latter a channel of a civilian branch. Functionally, the IDF as a military branch is closer to the conflict. If nevertheless, the former channel can be shown to be dominated rather by the typically less conflict-related branding and the latter by the typically more conflict-related shaming, this can provide particularly strong evidence for the validity of the theoretical expectations formulated previously in chapter 3.

For the automated quantitative analysis for the Israeli side the English-speaking Facebook pages of the IDF, the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office, the Government Press Office and the Israeli Mission to the United Nations were selected. Additionally, the English-speaking Twitter channels of the IDF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also selected to control for potential variations across platforms. For the PLO & the PNA the English-speaking Facebook-page of the Department for Public Diplomacy and Policy of the PLO and the Palestinian Mission to the United Nations were selected. Additionally, the English-speaking Twitter channels of the Palestinian Mission to the United Nations and the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO[36] were selected, so as to control for potential variations across platforms. For Hamas, the general English-speaking Twitter channel of the Hamas and the English-speaking channels of its military branch (the al-Qassam Brigades) on Twitter[37] and of the Palestinian Information Center on Facebook were selected.

These channels were selected for the analysis for the following reasons:

1. They represent branches of the conflict parties with different functions. This allows controlling for a potential variation due to varying functions.
2. These channels are those that are the most central and active ones for the conflict parties' external communication. They are also the channels with the highest outreach, as the upcoming section 4.2.1.1. demonstrates in detail.
3. All of the channels fulfill the criteria used to define external communication in chapter 2 (cf. section 2.1), as the upcoming section 4.2.1.2. shall show in detail.

For the analysis all accessible[38] data until (and including) the year 2016, i.e., until the time shortly before which the analysis had started, was collected and examined.

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36 The department has no English-speaking Facebook page, only a Twitter channel.

37 While the Hamas-affiliated Palestinian Information Center has a Facebook page, there are no Facebook pages using the names "Hamas" or "al-Qassam Brigades", as corresponding pages would be deleted by Facebook due to its user policies.

38 The API access to historical tweets of Twitter is limited to about 3,200 tweets. Therefore, a maximum of about 3,200 tweets could be collected from each Twitter channel (https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/tweets/timelines/api-reference/get-statuses-user_timeline.html, accessed: 27.06.2019).

4.2.1.1 Reasons for selection of channels: The most important social media channels of the conflict parties

The selected channels are the channels of the conflict parties' branches that are the most central and active ones for the external communication and the channels with the highest outreach:[39]

Israel – military bodies

A particularly prominent role within the public diplomacy network of the Israeli authorities is taken on by the Israeli army: Within the Israeli army, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the spokesperson's unit is responsible for taking over the media work, including the external communication. The IDF and its Spokesperson's Unit is one of the most important actors in the Israeli struggle for international support on social media. In early February 2018, the English-speaking IDF Facebook page exceeded the mark of two million followers,[40] making it to the second most-followed Facebook page of a national army after the US Army. The strong social media presence of the IDF resonated within traditional mass media as well. Especially during the Gaza War in 2014 almost all leading news outlets, broadcasters and newspapers reported on the IDF's use of social media.[41]

The prominent role for the external communication of the State of Israel is also reflected in the size of the unit: The first roots of the spokesperson's unit can be traced back to the beginnings of the IDF. During the last years, the IDF has further increased its efforts in the field of media (Magen & Lapid 2017) and in 2008 it had become "the largest spokesperson unit in Israel with more than 400 officers, civilians and soldiers and with a reserve unit of almost 1,200 soldiers and officers" (Gilboa & Shai 2011: 40). During the last years, in particular, considerable efforts were made to increase the unit's capacities in engaging within the realm of the social media. Initially, the social media work of the IDF started with small human and technical resources. As an IDF spokesperson describes, everything began in 2008 "with two soldiers with a laptop on the floor of [~~our~~ the IDF Spokesperson's Unit's] Jerusalem office" (Isr IDF: 151). In the meanwhile, the social media branch

39 The channels could be verified as official channels of the conflict parties with the help of the verification marks of the social media platforms, interviews with the corresponding organizations and branches of the conflict parties and references in the existing literature on the use of social media in the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

40 Post on the English-speaking Facebook page of the IDF celebrating surpassing the threshold of two million followers: https://www.facebook.com/idfonline/videos/1768763933146469/ (source accessed on: 27.06.2019).

41 E.g. the Guardian (cf. Guardian 16.07.2014), the Independent (cf. Independent 21.07.2014; Independent 14.07.2014), the BBC (cf. BBC 15.07.2014) and Channel 4 News (cf. Channel 4 10.07.2014) in the United Kingdom; the Tagesschau (cf. Tagesschau.de 30.07.2014) in Germany, Aljazeera (cf. Aljazeera 22.08.2014) in the Arab world.

of the unit has "grown unbelievably" (Isr IDF: 83). In 2017, the unit has already had "15 servicemen and women, including officers and soldiers" (Isr IDF: 151) that are only responsible for taking care of the international social media platforms of IDF in English and other languages, such as French and Arabic. This means that more staff is employed to take care of the external communication on social media than for domestic communication (According to an IDF spokesperson about eight to ten more people work for the Israeli social media channels in Hebrew (Isr IDF: 151)).

The IDF has channels on 30 social media platforms (as of 2015) (Channel 4 31.01.2015) including all leading social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram[42] and Snapchat[43] but also (though less active) channels on minor and more geographically, or functionally, specialized services such as e.g. the Russian social network VKontakte[44] or the social publishing platform Medium.[45] Besides in Hebrew,[46] the IDF Spokesperson's Unit is active on Twitter and Facebook in English,[47] Spanish[48] and French.[49] Furthermore, Avichay Adraee, the head of the Arab media division of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit, has his own Twitter and Facebook accounts in Arabic.[50] As it is the most followed language, this study focuses on the external communication in English.

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42 Links to the mentioned social media platforms can be also found on the website of the IDF (https://www.idf.il/en/); cf. also Isr IDF: 5.

43 For an impression of typical content on the Snapchat channel of the IDF cf. https://www.snapdex.com/idfofficial (source accessed on: 27.06.2019); cf. also Isr IDF: 5.

44 Link to the mentioned channel: https://vk.com/idf_rus (The channel has, however, not been updated since 2016.) (source accessed on: 27.06.2019).

45 Link to the mentioned channel: https://medium.com/@IDFOfficial (source accessed on: 27.06.2019).

46 Links to the mentioned channels: https://twitter.com/idfonline; https://www.facebook.com/tzahalonline/ (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

47 Links to the mentioned channels: https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson; https://www.facebook.com/idfonline/ (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

48 Links to the mentioned channels: https://twitter.com/FDIonline; https://www.facebook.com/IDFspanish/ (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

49 Links to the mentioned channels: https://twitter.com/Tsahal_IDF; https://www.facebook.com/tsahalfr/ (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

50 Links to the mentioned channels: https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee; https://www.facebook.com/IDFarabicAvichayAdraee (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019); Samuel-Azran & Yarchi (2018) examined the content of the Facebook page of Avichay Adaee during the Gaza War 2014 and the equivalent timeframe in 2015. Unfortunately, they do not differentiate in the presentation of their data between the two timeframes, what reduces the meaningfulness of the presented results, as different tactics might be used during routine situations than in war and emergency situations, as outlined in chapter 3 (section 3.5.2.) and shown empirically in chapter 8 (section 8.1.).

Besides the IDF Spokesperson's Unit itself, the Ministry of Defense[51] and some other branches of the IDF such as the Israeli Air Force[52] and the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)[53] have spokespeople of their own as well as separate social media channels in foreign languages. Moreover, several (high-ranking) members of the IDF have personal social media channels.[54] To provide an example from this group of additional military bodies the Facebook site of COGAT was selected for the empirical analysis.

Israel – Civilian governmental bodies

Besides the military bodies on the Israeli side, a number of civilian governmental bodies also engage extensively with social media for the purpose of reaching out to audiences abroad. Among the external communication efforts of the civilian governmental bodies in particular the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) play a central role for the Israeli external communication efforts (Molad 2012; Gilboa & Shai 2011: 36ff.)[55] and were, for this reason, selected for the empirical analysis.

Already early the Prime Minister's Office played a central role for the external communication efforts of the State of Israel in the social media: The social channels of the Prime Minister's Office were set up in 2010 by the PMO's Communications Department and the PMO's National Information Directorate (Israel PMO 31.08.2010). Since then the PMO has been represented with English-speaking[57]

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51 Channels in English: https://twitter.com/Israel_MOD; https://www.facebook.com/IsraelMOD/ (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

52 Channels in English: (https://twitter.com/IAFsite; https://www.facebook.com/IsraeliAirForce.EN/ (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

53 Channels in English: https://twitter.com/cogat_israel, https://www.facebook.com/cogat.israel/; channels in Arabic: https://twitter.com/CogatArabic; https://www.facebook.com/COGAT.ARABIC (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

54 E.g. the following Twitter channel: https://twitter.com/kerenhajioff (source accessed on: 27.06.2019).

55 Some authors examining Israeli public diplomacy mention also the Israeli Ministry of Tourism as a central actor for the Israeli external communication (Molad 2012; Gilboa & Shai 2011: 27,41). Indeed, a certain level of coordination between the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and the other governmental bodies exists. Moreover, representatives from the Israeli MFA highlight the usefulness of tourist experiences for painting a positive picture of Israel. However, the officials in charge of the social media channels of the Ministry of Tourism do not consider it to be their primary task to improve the image of Israel and to engage in political affairs. Instead, they consider it to be their primary task to sell the product of tourism in Israel abroad and to help this way the Israeli tourism industry (Isr MoT: 110f.).

56 Number of followers / fans according to the statistics from the social media platforms on 08.02.2019 (besides figures for Israel at the UN, which are from 20.06.2019).

57 Additionally, separate from the English-speaking channels, the directorates in charge of the communication of the PMO also manage channels in Hebrew (Facebook: https://www.fac

Table 6: Overview – Official English-speaking Facebook and Twitter channels of the branches of the Israeli government most relevant for its external communication efforts (The channels that were selected for the empirical analysis are marked in light grey) [56]

Branch	Function of branch	Platform	Channel name	Number of fans/ followers
Israeli Defense Forces	Military branch	Facebook	Israel Defense Forces	2,141,262 fans 2,100,652 followers
		Twitter	@IDF	961K followers
Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories	Military / humanitarian cooperation	Facebook	Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories	10,639 fans 10,938 followers
		Twitter	@cogatonline	9,734 followers
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	External representation	Facebook	Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs	558,281 fans 558,262 followers
		Twitter	@IsraelMFA	191K followers
		Twitter	@israel	527K followers
Mission of the State of Israel to the United Nations in NYC	External representation	Facebook	Israel at the UN	95,971 fans 96,233 followers
		Twitter	@IsraelinUN	21.3K followers
Prime Minister's Office	Head of government	Facebook	The Prime Minister of Israel	1,216,050 fans 1,221,367 followers
		Twitter	@IsraeliPM	660K followers
Government Press Office	Head of government	Facebook	Government Press Office	6,334 fans 6,716 follower
		Twitter	@GPOIsrael	25.1K followers

channels on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube,

ebook.com/HEBPMO/; Twitter: https://twitter.com/israelipm_heb). Besides the official governmental social media channels for the Prime Minister's Office, Netanyahu also has private social media channels for himself as a politician (https://www.facebook.com/Netanyahu/; https://twitter.com/netanyahu). His political party, the Likud party, is present on different social media platforms as well (https://www.facebook.com/LikudNetanyahu). All these channels are, however, only available in Hebrew. The content on the channels for external communication and domestic communication on the government pages is in contrast to the channels of other branches of the Israeli government comparatively similar (the biggest difference is that speeches of the Prime Minister in English are published only as a summary on the Hebrew-speaking channel and speeches in Hebrew only as a summary on English-speaking channel). A stronger contrast, however, can be observed between the governmental channels and the party-political channels aiming mostly to a domestic audience. The latter have a more aggressive tone than the governmental channels which also aim to reach out to audiences abroad (all sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

Flickr[58] and Instagram,[59] using the account name "The Prime Minister of Israel" for naming the channels. The centrality of the PMO for the external communication efforts of the State of Israel is also reflected in the magnitude of the communication apparatus of the PMO: Nowadays within the PMO the National Information Directorate is in charge of coordinating "the public diplomacy activities of various governmental bodies in foreign and security affairs, and on socioeconomic issues" (Israel PMO s.a.). Additionally, the PMO has a Public Diplomacy Directorate in charge of communicating the policies and decisions of the Prime Minister and its government. The directorate is headed by the Prime Minister's Media Advisor (Israel PMO s.a.). Additionally, the Government Press Office (GPO), a department that takes care of the relations of the Israeli government with the foreign press. This department is attached to the Prime Minister's Office. The GPO employs its own English-speaking social media channels too.

Similar to the PMO, the MFA's centrality for the external communication efforts of the State of Israel is also reflected in the scale of the apparatus used for the production and dissemination of media content: Besides directorates dealing with political and regional issues or more organizational and administrative issues, the Israeli MFA also has a Public Diplomacy Directorate. The directorate consists of the Media and Public Affairs Division, the Division for Cultural Affairs and Scientific Cooperation and the Bureau for Religious Affairs and Relations with the Jewish Diaspora. The Media and Public Affairs Division comprises one department in charge of "branding", a department in charge of collecting information, producing visual media content such as videos and drafting policy papers for briefing Israeli missions all around the world, as well as the spokesperson's bureau, which is in charge of the relationship with the press. Furthermore, the division also has an academic department and a small department dealing with issues of civil society affairs, especially the battle against BDS. Finally, the ministry has also a Digital Diplomacy Department, which is in charge of all digital channels of the ministry. Their tasks include taking care of the ministry's websites and the central social media channels of the ministry as well as supporting the social media operations of the missions worldwide (Isr MFA2: 6; cf. also Israeli MFA s.a.).

Online activities, in particular, have become an important focus of the MFA, which is also reflected in the number of social media channels that have been set up by the MFA and the number of staff it has employed to take care for these channels: The Digital Diplomacy Department, which is in charge of the online presence

58 Cf. New Jersey Jewish News 19.06.2013; http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokemedia310810.aspx (accessed: 08.01.2019, in the meanwhile the link is broken).

59 Link to the mentioned channel: https://www.instagram.com/israelipm/?hl=en (bilingual channel in English and Hebrew) (source accessed on: 27.06.2019).

of the ministry, is comprised of twelve employees. Seven of whom oversee the social media activities of the ministry on its various platforms (Twiplomacy 28.04.2015). Additionally, almost all of the embassies and diplomatic missions of the State of Israel have their own social media channels in English or in the language of the respective host country. In each of the diplomatic missions of the State of Israel abroad, there is an employee who is responsible for taking care of the social media presence of the mission (Twiplomacy 28.04.2015). Furthermore, the ministry employs some English-speaking thematic channels, e.g. on culture and sustainability.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)
While their resources to do so are much more limited than the resources of the Israeli side,[60] the PLO & the PNA are also active on social media in English, mostly on Facebook and Twitter. For PLO's external communication two departments play a central role: The "Negotiations Affairs Department" (PLO-NAD)[61] and the "Department of Public Diplomacy & Policy" (PLO-DPDP). Both have major social media channels in English. Until 2018 the DPDP was called "Department of Culture and Information" (PLO-DCI). The renaming along with some restructuring aimed to further increase the visibility of the Palestinian cause worldwide (WAFA 20.08.2018). To improve the success of its external communication and social media work the PLO has hired experienced and professional media advisors.

Additionally, the structures attached to the PNA have social media channels used for external communication: While the government organizations in Ramallah have comparatively small social media channels (The Palestinian Ministry of

60 In comparison to the resources of the Israeli government. the resources of the PNA and its diplomatic missions are much more limited: Within the MOFA a team of three people is in charge of the communication and media work of the ministry (Pal MOFA: 117f.) and most of the Palestinian diplomatic missions cannot afford to pay for an own position for media and communication work. However, the task of external communication is still perceived in the corresponding bodies as crucial and all of these bodies have motivated individuals within their staff trying to compensate for the lack of resources by taking over the task to manage the social media channels as an extra task.

61 Link to the mentioned channel: https://twitter.com/nadplo (source accessed on: 27.06.2019).

62 Branches of the PLO & the PNA that do not have a function related to external representation and diplomacy are not active in English on the social media.

63 Number of followers / fans according to the statistics from the social media platforms on 08.02.2019. The mostly in comparison to the Israeli side lower numbers of fans and followers can be explained by the high number of actors communicating on behalf of the Palestinian side: not only the PLO & the PNA but also Hamas and a particularly high number of civil society actors are active in the social media. This makes it likely that the attention is split. Furthermore, the PLO & the PNA do have unlike the Israeli side hardly any, or even no, resources for funding paid advertisement on the different social media platforms (PLO MA: 97, 133, 180).

Table 7: Overview – The most relevant official English-speaking Facebook and Twitter channels of PLO & the PNA (The channels that were selected for the empirical analysis are marked in light grey) [62] [63]

Branch	Function of branch	Platform	Channel name	Number of fans/ followers
PLO – DPDP	External representation	Facebook	PLO Department of Public Diplomacy & Policy	4,426 fans 4,486 followers
		Twitter	@PLO_DPDP	1321 followers
PLO - NAD	External representation	Twitter	@nadplo	35.2K followers
PNA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	External representation	Facebook	Remember Palestine	1,486 fans 1,543 followers
Permanent Observer Mission to the UN	External representation	Facebook	Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations	6,578 fans 6,615 followers
		Twitter	@Palestine_UN	45.9K followers

Foreign Affairs – abbreviated MOFA – has a minor Facebook page in English.[64] Moreover, the Prime Minister's Office of the State of Palestine has an English-speaking Twitter channel, which uses English as the main language, however, only since 2017.[65]), the major representations of the PLO & the PNA abroad play a particularly central role for the external communication of the Palestinian authorities. They have their own social media channels in foreign languages (especially in English). In particular, the social media channels of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York enjoy a high level of

64 The page has the title "Remember Palestine" (https://www.facebook.com/palestinianministryofforeignaffairs/). Furthermore, very recently, in November 2018, another minor Facebook page called "Palestinian Public Diplomacy" was set up (https://www.facebook.com/PalestinianDiplomacy/?fref=pb&hc_location=profile_browser) (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

65 Until 2017 the Twitter channel (https://twitter.com/PalestinePMO) was in Arabic. From February 2017 the language of the Twitter channel was switched from Arabic to English. On Facebook, the Palestinian PMO remains presented only by a Facebook page using mostly Arabic language (https://www.facebook.com/Palestine.PMO/). Other ministries and bodies of the PNA have only social media channels for domestic purposes in Arabic. The Facebook page of the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) is almost completely in Arabic as well, only occasionally also English translations are provided (https://www.facebook.com/pica.mofa/?fref=pb&hc_location=profile_browser). WAFA, the most important PNA-affiliated news agency has only social media channels in Arabic, too (https://twitter.com/wafa_ps; https://www.facebook.com/wafagency/) (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

attention.[66] With about 45,900 followers the mission's Twitter channel is one of the most followed accounts among all missions to the United Nations, surpassing, for example, the accounts of the missions of influential nations such as Germany, Sweden, Italy, Japan and China. Therefore, this channel was chosen for the empirical analysis.

Hamas

Also for Hamas, communication and media have always been a big priority. An own information section manages a comprehensive media network within the structures of Hamas (Ganor 1992). Besides channels aimed at reaching out to the Palestinian population[67] and the Arab world, Hamas soon set up separate channels for reaching out to non-Arab audiences abroad, investing strongly in its external communication. As early as the 1990s Hamas had a strong presence online and social media has become a key element of Hamas' external communication (Abdelal 2016: esp. 181ff.): The most noteworthy accounts, which gained a lot of traction both internally and internationally, are an English-speaking official channel named after the organization on Twitter and an English-speaking channel of the military branch of Hamas, al-Qassam Brigades (EQB),[68] on Twitter,[69] this attention was particularly noticeable during the Gaza Wars.[70]

Additionally, Hamas has set up news agencies to spread its messages abroad (Abdelal 2016: 183). In December 1997 Hamas initiated the Palestinian Information Center. Only a month later the English-speaking version of the website was launched (Mozes & Weimann 2010: 222). In the meanwhile, the website is available in English, Arabic, French, Russian, Turkish, Malay and Persian.[72] Since 2011, the Palestinian Information Center has been active on social media with channels on

66 Links to the mentioned channels: Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Palestine.at.UN/; Twitter: https://twitter.com/Palestine_UN (sources accessed on: 27.06.2019).

67 The network includes magazines and newspapers such as Falestin al-Muslimah and since 2006 also an own television program, Al Aqsa TV (Ganor 1992; Mozes & Weimann 2010).

68 The Twitter channel of the al-Qassam Brigades has been suspended several times. Yet, after the suspension each time the organization has set up a new channel with a slightly different user name (BBC 15.07.2014; Christian Science Monitor 17.07.2014; Times of Israel 08.01.2017).

69 Neither Hamas as a whole nor the al-Qassam Brigades employ an official channel on Facebook, as channels named after Hamas are not tolerated by Facebook and would be suspended by the social media platform (Times of Israel 08.01.2017).

70 E.g. the BBC (cf. BBC 15.11.2012). CNN (cf. CNN 19.11.2012), the New York Times (cf. New York Times 21.11.2012) or NBC News (cf. NBC News 30.07.2014).

71 Number of followers / fans according to the statistics from the social media platforms on 08.02.2019.

72 Cf. language options on: https://english.palinfo.com/ (source accessed on: 28.06.2019); cf. also Mozes & Weimann 2010: 217.

Table 8: Overview – The most relevant official English-speaking Facebook and Twitter channels of Hamas (The channels that were selected for the empirical analysis are marked in blue) [71]

Branch	Function of branch	Platform	Channel name	Number of fans/ followers
Hamas Movement (in general)	Organizational leadership	Twitter	@HamasInfoEn	71.8K followers
al-Qassam Brigades (EQB)	Military branch	Twitter	Different names, as frequently suspended	Currently suspended
Palestinian Information Center	News agency	Facebook	The Palestinian Information Center	645,591 fans 714,304 followers
		Twitter	@palinfoen	26.7K followers
Shebab Agency	News agency	Facebook	Shehab News	10,395 fans 10,731 follower
		Twitter	@ShehabAgencyEn	67.4K followers

Facebook and Twitter. More than 640,000 fans on Facebook and about 26,800 followers on Twitter follow the Palestinian Information Center now. This makes the Facebook page one of the most-followed English-speaking pages about the Palestinian cause. The social media presence of the Palestinian Information Center has become, therefore, one of the leading gateways and a backbone of Hamas' external communication. Besides the Palestinian Information Center Hamas has also established a second major news agency, the Shebab Agency (Abdelal 2016: 183). Since 2017, the agency is also present on Twitter.[73] As it is the most-followed channel and as it has been in operation since 2011, the English-speaking Facebook page of the Palestinian Information Center was selected for the empirical analysis.

4.2.1.2 Reasons for the selection of channels: Social media as a source allowing to control for the communication context

Another reason for the selection of the channels is that all of the selected channels meet the criteria of the definition of external communication developed previously in chapter 2 (cf. section 2.1.) and, therefore, the communication context can be assumed to be the same for all of these channels. For this reason, social media is a source providing data that allows to control for the communication context very well:

Differentiation between external and domestic communication

All conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine and their branches that are active on social media differentiate between external and domestic communi-

73 Link to the mentioned channel: https://twitter.com/ShehabAgencyEn (source accessed on: 28.06.2019).

cation.[74] All of them have social media channels that are aimed predominantly, or arguably mostly exclusively, for external communication, i.e., on which the communicating actors adapt their messages toward foreign audiences and not to their domestic audiences.

Target group definitions of the actors – Reaching out beyond the core of own supporters

On a more specific level, the target groups of the different conflict parties and their different branches are identical: The different branches of the conflict parties active on social media have all reflected on potential audiences of their external communication and have defined the target audiences of their external communication. Both sides distinguish between three major types of international audiences that could potentially be defined as target audiences: supporters already convinced of the own position of the communicating conflict party, supporters of the opponent position and a third group that is not yet affiliated to any of both sides. Of these three groups, the biggest group is in the perception of the conflict parties the group of people that are neither clearly "Pro-Israeli" nor clearly "Pro-Palestinian", i.e., the group of non-affiliated people.[75] All branches agree that out of these three potential

74 As argued before this differentiation between external and domestic communication is crucial for the analysis, as the two different communication contexts provide different conditions to which strategic actors can be expected to adapt differently. Indeed, for a majority of the different branches of the conflict parties the content of the external communication is significantly different from the content on the channels aiming to reach out to domestic audiences, as can be also observed in practice: The spokesperson's unit of the IDF, for example, differentiates clearly between foreign and domestic social media channels in the organizational structure. An own branch is responsible exclusively for the external communication. The content of the domestic and international channels varies significantly. In particular, the focus on military content is much bigger on the Hebrew channels than on the international channels. This differentiation is perceived by the IDF to be important, as the spokesperson's unit has identified the two audiences as different target groups that need to be addressed in different ways. The spokesperson's unit considers this distinction to be part of its pioneer spirit and as a unique and innovative feature of the IDF, as in other countries (such as the United States, Germany or the United Kingdom) within the military the external communication is taken up by the regular public affairs departments and there are no separate branches of the military for communicating to audiences abroad in foreign languages and other armies (such as the French army) even do not have public affairs departments at all (Isr IDF: 179-181).

75 As the following statement of a member of the digital diplomacy team of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs demonstrates, this perception of the international public is the starting point for reflections about the definition of target groups and, therefore, subsequently also for the selection of strategies of external communication by the conflict parties: "our starting point of what we are doing is the understanding that the world is divided into three groups, as far this will concern: The group that likes Israel, which is approximately 10 to 15%, the group which hates Israel, which is about the same size – about 10 to 15%, and those 70% in the middle – the elephant in the room, which do not know much or anything at all about Israel. They have never heard of Israel and they – when you say Israel to them, they say: Okay

target groups the group of non-affiliated people is the most valuable to them. This group, therefore, has been selected by all branches as the primary target group. The other two target groups are considered to be only of secondary importance (For a detailed description of the target groups cf. the chapter A.1.4. "The target groups of the external communication on the social media channels of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine" in the online annex).

Attributability, directionality and relationship with the target audience

Furthermore, all of the selected channels can be characterized as official channels, and all of them are easily attributable to the corresponding conflict party or at least to the branch of the conflict party to which the social media channel belongs. Moreover, all of the selected channels can be characterized as unidirectional mass communication, as the staff taking care of the channels do not interact with their audiences in a dialogical form on the channels, or at least, they do not interact a lot. Finally, all of the communicating conflict parties and all of their branches active on social media do not treat their audiences in a hostile way but rather as potential supporters, i.e., the relationship with the target audience can be considered to be positive or at least neutral.

4.2.2 Quantifying qualitative content analysis

Having explained which channels have been selected for which reason, the following sections now explain the methods used for the empirical analysis: In order to identify the conflict parties' strategies of external communication used in the conflict in Israel and Palestine and so as to answer the first research question this way (*Which strategies of external communication do the conflict parties choose for their external communication?*) a quantifying[76] qualitative content analysis (Mayring 1991; cf. also Ramsenthaler 2013) was conducted. As the most central accounts of the conflict parties alone have produced a data set of more than 40,000 posts, two samples were selected for the manual qualitative part of the analysis, as explained in section 4.2.1.: One sample from the State of Israel representing a topdog and one sample from Hamas representing an underdog was selected. For both of the se-

– what is it? I have never heard about it. Because they have their own lives. They live in Brazil, they live in Ethiopia, they live in – I do not know where. And they all have their own lives and their own problems" (Isr MFA2: 9).

76 To highlight that the goal of the "qualitative" (i.e., relying on manual coding) content analysis is not only to get qualitative descriptions but also an impression about frequencies the term "quantifying" was added to the name of the method (cf. a similar terminology used by other studies, e.g. Wöhlert 2007: 82ff.).

lected accounts, the last 100 Facebook posts of each year[77] were collected. The data was collected with the software Facepager (Jünger & Keyling 2018) and the data was stored as CSV-files.[78] For each post the dominant communication strategy used in the post was coded (i.e., shaming, branding or other). By coding all of the posts from the samples, the distribution of how often which communication strategies were used by the actors that had published them, i.e., general trends or, in other terms, the overall strategies of external communication of the actors (shaming-dominated, branding-dominated, balanced or other)[79] could be determined. The coding was conducted based on rules (cf. also Ramsenthaler 2013: 24f.) summarized in a codebook. The codebook was developed based on the conceptualizations from chapter 2 (cf. section 2.2.).[80]

4.2.3 Robustness test: Automated quantitative large-scale content analysis

As the quantifying qualitative content analysis only examines the external communication of two particular branches of the conflict parties within a quite limited timeframe, in a second step an automated quantitative large-scale content analysis was conducted in order to test whether the tendencies observed in the quantifying qualitative content analysis can also be observed over a longer timeframe and for the conflict parties' other channels. For the automated quantitative large-scale content analysis a simple dictionary approach was applied to the entire collected data set, consisting of the complete, available data from all the channels selected in section 4.2.1. for the analysis up until the end of 2016.[81] The analysis uses the tendency that for shaming typically negatively connoted words are used, whilst for branding no negatively connoted words are used (see also conceptualizations in chapter 2) and determines the percentage of negative communication: A post was coded as negative, if it either mentions (1) the name of the opponent or a branch or organization of the opponent[82] and/or (2) it mentions a word describing a neg-

77 Not only the data from 2016 but also the data from the earlier years were collected in order to get also a first impression about the development over time.

78 The process is described in detail in the manual „Collection and storing of social media data" in the online annex (section A.2.2.).

79 The analysis focuses on frequencies and does not distinguish between different intensities of shaming or branding, as, if shaming is used, it is done almost always with a very high level of negativity and, if branding is used, it is done almost always with a very high level of positivity.

80 The full codebook is attached to this study in the online annex of this study (section A.2.1.).

81 For examples for applications of the dictionary approach and methodological descriptions cf. also: Kreuder-Sonnen 2016: 89f.; Krippendorff 2004: 283; Rauh & Bödeker 2016; Schäfer et al. 2016.

82 Both exploratory analyses and the quantifying qualitative analysis showed that if the opponent is mentioned, it is almost always done in a negative way aiming to shame the opponent.

ative action, value or attitude.[83] A post that was not coded by implication can be considered to be positive or at least neutral communication. A high share of coded posts, therefore, indicates a shaming-dominated external communication, while a low share indicates a branding-dominated external communication.

4.2.4 Robustness test: Interviews, primary source documents and literature research

To further confirm the results of the quantifying qualitative content analysis and the automated quantitative large-scale content analysis, semi-structured interviews and a literature research were also conducted and primary source documents related to the topic of the conflict parties' external communication were collected. It was possible for almost all major branches of the State of Israel and the PLO & the PNA that are active on English-speaking social media accounts to conduct interviews with (high-ranking) officials who are currently in charge of the external communication on the corresponding accounts (for a recital of all interviewees and a description of the methods for data collection and analysis cf. section 4.3.2., as both research questions of this study were addressed in the same interviews and many of the collected documents can contribute to answering both research questions).

4.3 Explaining the selection of external communication strategies

Having identified the conflict parties' external communication strategies, the second part of the empirical analysis aims to explain the selection of the strategies identified in the first part in order to answer the second research question: *What shapes the selection of communication strategies of conflict parties?* Having developed a solid theory derived from the existing literature in chapter 3, the format of a within-case analysis allows theory-testing by reconstructing the selection process of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts (cf. also Hak & Dul 2009a: 937ff.; Gerring 2013: 5). To demonstrate the causal interference between the conflict structure, as the condition, and the selected communication strategies, as the outcome, the empirical analysis follows the logic of pattern matching (Campbell 1988; Yin 1981: 68; Almutairi et al. 2014; Hak & Dul 2009b: 663ff.). For maximizing the (internal) validity, state-of-the-art checks and standards[84] for validity

83 When creating the dictionary, all words were considered that were mentioned at least ten times in the sample.

84 E.g. also checks and standards from other frameworks for the qualitative analysis of causal interferences such as (qualitative) congruence analysis and process (tracing) analysis are integrated, as far as possible.

have been integrated (for a description of the checks and standards cf. the chapter A.1.3. "Validity checks and standards" in the online annex).

4.3.1 Pattern matching

The logic of pattern-matching assumes that even a single case study can provide a strong test for a theory, if an entire set of expectations deduced from this theory ("a theoretically expected pattern") can be verified empirically (Hak & Dul 2009b: 663). For the verification, the theoretically predicted patterns need to be compared with the patterns observed in the empirical analysis. If the patterns observed empirically match the patterns predicted theoretically, this indicates a good internal validity and confirms (or at least affirms) the plausibility of the theoretical propositions (Almutairi et al. 2014: 3). Good pattern-matching requires both a strong and precise theory and a comprehensive collection of empirical data (Yin 2011: 39f.).[85]

In this case study, the theoretically expected patterns to be examined are the three pathways derived in the theory chapter (chapter 3): the audience pathway, the prioritization pathway and the picturability pathway. All pathways represent a configuration of different elements (the steps of the pathway) and, therefore, each pathway forms a pattern suitable for examination with the pattern matching logic. Empirically, a broad range of data was collected and examined with content analyses: interviews with practitioners were conducted and press articles with references to the examined topic were collected. Additionally, conference documents, internal documents and academic contributions relevant for the research interest and, as far as applicable (e.g. to quantify the disparity among the conflict parties), statistical data were included in the analysis (cf. overview in figure 12).

4.3.2 Data collection

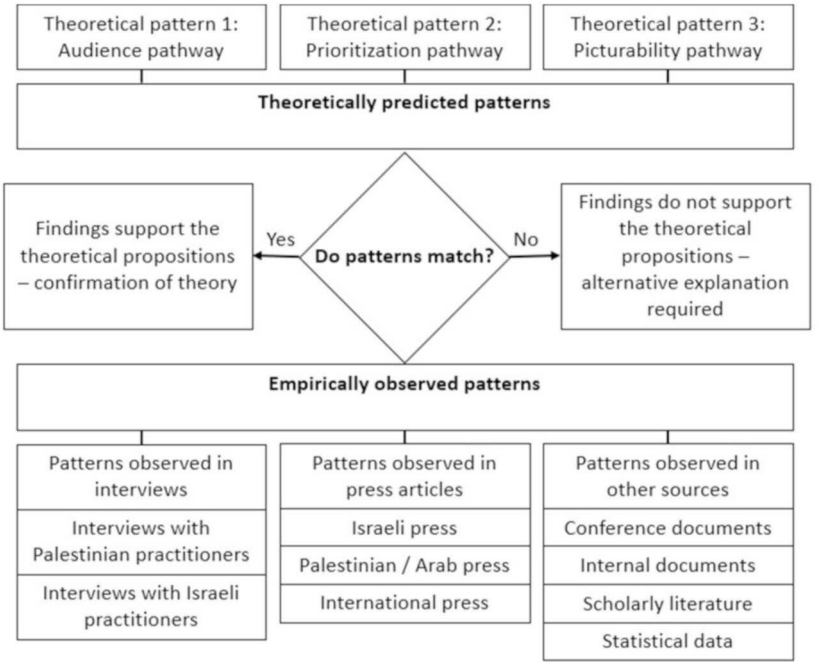
A broad range of data was collected and used for the empirical analysis, including interviews with practitioners, press articles with references to the examined topic and conference documents, internal documents and academic contributions relevant for the research interest and, as far as applicable, statistical data:

Interviews with practitioners

On the side of the Israeli government interviews with officials from almost all Israeli government bodies that maintain the major social media channels relevant for the Israeli external communication efforts could be conducted. Interviews were

85 Additionally, a series of validity standards and checks were applied. For a description of the standards and checks see the chapter A.1.3. "Checks and standards for maximizing validity" in the online annex.

Figure 12: Illustration of the pattern matching process



Source: Own illustration based on Almutairi et al. 2014: 7

conducted with representatives of the spokesperson's unit of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the Israeli Government Press Office (GPO), the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). Most of the interviewees had a leading role in their units and teams. Additionally, a former IDF spokesperson and employee of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) as well as a former COGAT liaison officer and Pro-Israeli advocacy expert could be interviewed. On the side of the PLO & the PNA, interviews with officials from almost all official Palestinian bodies that maintain the major social media channels relevant for the external communication could be conducted. Interviews were conducted with representatives of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York, the Palestinian Mission to the United Kingdom, the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, a PLO media advisor and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine. Interviews with Hamas could not be conducted. However, the comprehensive collection of material from

the PLO & the PNA allows at least a profound analysis of one of the two (underdog) actors on the Palestinian side.

All interviews were designed as semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann 2014). To minimize the potential influence of the interviewer all interviews started with comparatively open questions, with more specific questions being asked in the second part of the interview. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah, London, New York and Canberra, mostly at the working spaces of the interviewees. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, many interviewees asked not to be mentioned by name. Therefore, in accordance with the established ethical standards for social-scientific research, the interviews were anonymized (Thomson et al. 2005).

Section 10.2. provides an overview of all the interviews that were conducted for this study, including the dates and locations of the interviews and an overview of which abbreviations are used to mark quotations from the corresponding interviews.

Press articles

Additionally, press articles related to the topic of external communication during the conflict in Israel and Palestine were included in the analysis. To identify relevant articles a keyword search was conducted using keywords such as "public diplomacy", "hasbara"[86] and "external communication". Especially in the English-speaking online editions of the major Israeli newspapers (Jerusalem Post, Haaretz, The Times of Israel, ynetnews.com) plenty of guest contributions and quotations from statements of government officials, members of the Knesset and social media and public diplomacy experts could be collected, which reflect on the State of Israel's external communication and social media work. The collection encompasses newspapers from across the entire political spectrum, making it possible to control for the political orientation as a potential interfering factor for the selection of a strategy of external communication. Major Palestinian and Arab newspapers were also searched for press articles related to the topic of external communication during the conflict in Israel and Palestine (WAFA, Ma'an News Agency, Palestinian Chronicle, Aljazeera, Al-Monitor). While these sources offer fewer references to the external communication of their own side and focus more on opinion-making articles than critical reflections of the Palestinian external communication strategy, some relevant statements and references could still be identified. Finally, articles from major international press outlets were collected. Especially during the Gaza

86 "Hasbara" can be translated roughly with the English term "explain". It is the Hebrew term for "external communication". Today the Israeli practitioners rather tend to prefer the term "public diplomacy" instead, as they consider the early Hasbara efforts as too defensive (Isr MFA2: 57, 48; cf. also Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2006: 735).

Wars in 2012 and 2014, the external communication of the IDF and Hamas was widely reflected in the international press.

Other documents

Furthermore, the data collection is complemented by a series of other sources including conference documents,[87] internal documents and academic contributions which provide additional information on the processes of developing external communication strategies in the different Israeli and Palestinian branches and which also provide insights to the reflections and intentions of the involved practitioners. As far as applicable (e.g. to quantify the disparity among the conflict parties) statistical data was also included in the analysis. The data was retrieved from widely recognized databases such as the databases of the World Bank and the OECD and the CIA Factbook.

87 Most importantly, documents from the Herzliya Conference, Israel's most prominent annual conference on global policy, could be collected. In 2010, in the context of the conference, a series of workshops were organized which reflected on Israel's external communication, in which various government officials and some other social media and public diplomacy experts took part.

Empirics I – Identifying strategies of externalcommunication in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

5. Empirics I – Identifying strategies of external communication in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

Having developed the necessary framework consisting of conceptualizations, theory and research design, the first empirical chapter of this study explores empirically *what communication strategies conflict parties use in their external communication*. The results of the empirical analysis answering this question reveal an interesting trend regarding the kinds of communication strategies the different conflict parties select for their external communication: The external communication on the Palestinian social media channels strongly focuses on shaming their opponent. The channels of the State of Israel, in contrast, are dominated by branding and the majority of all of their posts do not even refer to the ongoing conflict at all.[1] It is only during a few short stages of the conflict, that the external communication is dominated by shaming on both sides. The observed selection of communication, therefore, contradicts with what would be expected from the perspective of common theories and assumptions: The strong focus on branding on the Israeli side cannot be explained with the theory of the negativity bias, which would expect all actors to choose shaming. The strong focus on shaming on the Palestinian side, in contrast, does not fit to the trend in marketing and social media practices to focus especially on positive self-promotion.

1 The results also comply with the research of Sarvestani et al. (2018: 11), though this research focuses only on Israeli communication directed toward US audiences, is less differentiated concerning the communication context and lacks theoretically conceptualized categories for distinguishing different strategies of external communication (cf. Sarvestani et al. 2018: 7).

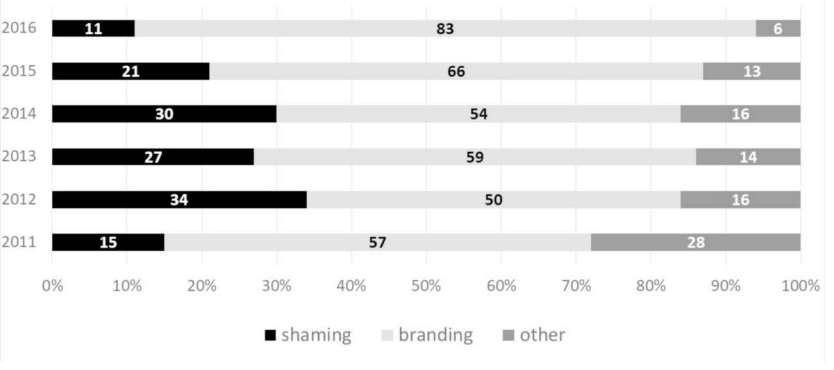
5.1 Results of the quantifying qualitative content analysis

5.1.1 Israel – The strategy of external communication of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)

General tendency

The quantifying empirical analysis shows that the external communication of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) is strongly dominated by branding. More than 80% of the analyzed posts from 2016 feature a branding message (cf. figure 13):

Figure 13: Themes used on the English-speaking Facebook page of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) (last 100 posts each year)



Shaming, in contrast, is only used sporadically. In general, even though the IDF is the military branch of the State of Israel, only very few references referring directly to the conflict can be observed on its English-speaking Facebook page. Other communication tactics hardly play a role in the external communication of the IDF on its English-speaking Facebook page (cf. figure 13).

Branding

The reference themes used by the IDF for branding on its English-speaking Facebook page are quite diverse:

Some of the branding posts showcase the military capabilities of the Israeli army (34.1% of all examined branding posts for 2011-2016). Among these more military-related branding posts, posts that demonstrate the professional skills and attitude of the IDF are prominent. Often these skills are presented in action-packed videos showing spectacular scenes from the trainings of the IDF. In these military-related posts, the IDF often presents the modernity of their weaponry and that their international partners, such as the United States, also make some of

their most modern weaponry available to Israel. A minority of the posts also describe military and security related success stories of the IDF (6.0% of all examined branding posts from 2011-2016).

Besides being the social media channel of a military entity, however, even more posts among the branding posts are not directly linked to classical military topics but to widely relatable topics (59.9% of all examined branding posts from 2011-2016). These not conflict-related posts showcase the diversity of the IDF, its humanitarian aid missions, soldiers celebrating Jewish and other holidays, the international cooperation of the IDF, or even modern technology, artistic performances or efforts for more sustainability, to name a few.

Shaming

While most of the posts in the analyzed sample are posts with branding, a minority of the posts also contain shaming. Notably, the shaming of the IDF, however, is not directed against "Palestine" as a whole or the Palestinian civil population, rather they either mention as perpetrators "Hamas" (24.6% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016), "Palestinian extremists" or "Palestinian terrorists" (53.6% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016). The Palestinian civil population, in contrast, is mentioned in the external communication only as a group who receives help from Israel, or as a group who suffers from (alleged) misdeeds of "Hamas" or other "Palestinian extremists" as well.[2] The shaming of the IDF mostly refers to acts of physical violence (67.4% of the examined shaming posts for 2011-2016[3]) such as rocket attacks, stabbings or shootings, often labeled or framed as "terror attacks". Occasionally, the construction of terror tunnels, incitement and the fear of the Israeli population to become victims of an attack are also used as reference themes for the shaming of the IDF.

While most frequently Israeli civilians are described as victims in the shaming posts (39.9% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016), (unlike in the shaming posts in the external communication of the Palestinian side) in a notable amount of posts (22.5% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016) the victims are identified as soldiers and, therefore, clearly as combatants. Furthermore, (unlike many "Pro-Palestinian" or third-party sources) the IDF, when describing the victims

2 This way the conflict line is defined between extremists and non-extremists threatened and harmed by the extremists' actions and not between Israelis and Palestinians and the IDF perceives itself as clearly belonging to the latter "good" group while Hamas is characterized as part of the former "bad" group. Hamas is even portrayed as "a radical terrorist organization, with the same Jihadist ideology as ISIS" (IDF on their English-speaking Twitter channel, 24.08.2014: https://twitter.com/idfspokesperson/status/503438902170877952, source accessed on 24.04.2018).

3 Additionally, 5.1 % of the shaming posts featured thwarted attacks as a reference object for shaming.

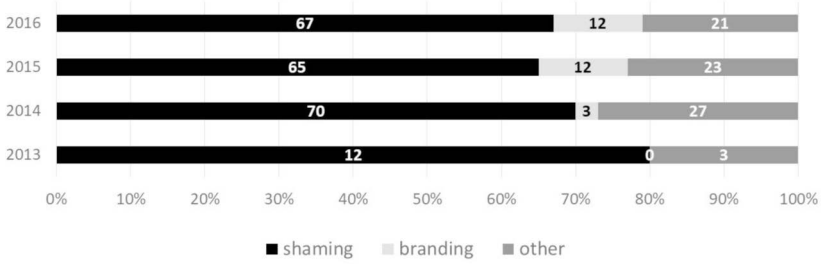
of violent incidents, do not differentiate between "settlers" as victims and Israelis living within the territory which is recognized by the international law as territory of the State of Israel.[4]

5.1.2 Palestine – The strategy of external communication of the Palestinian Information Center (PIC)

General tendency

The external communication of the Palestinian Information Center (PIC), in contrast, is clearly dominated by shaming. About two-thirds of the analyzed posts feature a shaming message (cf. figure 14).

Figure 14: Themes used on the English-speaking Facebook page of the Palestinian Information Center (last 100 posts each year)[5]



In contrast, the analysis clearly shows that branding hardly plays a role in the external communication of the PIC on its English-speaking Facebook page. Only 12% of the analyzed posts from 2016 contain a branding message. No other communication tactic plays a major role in the English-speaking external communication of the PIC either (cf. figure 14).[6]

4 Cf. e.g. this tweet of the IDF's spokesperson's unit on their English-speaking Twitter channel (10.01.2018: https://twitter.com/idfspokesperson/status/951106733488988160; source accessed on: 02.03.2018) about the murder of Rabbi Raziel Shevach in comparison to a report of the BBC (BBC 10.01.2018). By not mentioning the settler status, the IDF avoids associations with the accusations of occupying Eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank.

5 In 2012, no posts were published on the Facebook page. In 2011 and 2013 less than 100 posts were published in total. Almost all posts of 2011 did not contain any text.

6 A communication tactic that can be found particularly frequently among the other posts are expressions of resilience, highlighting the importance of keeping up the efforts to resist the Israeli occupation. Typically, however, these expressions are framed in a non-violent way.

Shaming

Almost all posts in the examined sample from the PIC's English-speaking Facebook page are directly connected to the conflict, and most of them contain shaming. A majority of the shaming posts describes acts of physical violence of the Israeli side and their implications to the Palestinian side (41.8% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016).[7] Various different forms of violence of the Israeli side and various different forms of suffering on the Palestinian side are described. However, besides the references to acts of physical violence, additionally, several groups of reference themes for shaming can be observed on the PIC's English-speaking Facebook page that cannot be observed in the external communication of the IDF at all: In the PIC's external communication also the occupation and the blockade of the Gaza Strip (16.4% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016), the detention of Palestinians and the treatment of prisoners by the Israeli authorities (14.1% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016), Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory (4.2% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016) and the refuge and expulsion of Palestinians (0.9% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016) are frequently used topics.

Particularly often the Israeli army, individual Israeli soldiers or the Israeli security forces are described as perpetrators (33.8% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016). However, even more often simply "Israel" as a whole is identified as the perpetrator in the shaming posts of the PIC (37.1% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016).

The victims described in the shaming posts, in contrast, are most of the time identified as civilians (47.6% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016) – often as individuals from social groups such as children, youth, seniors, disabled people or women, i.e., particularly vulnerable groups. Unlike in the external communication of the IDF, not in one single shaming post a victim is explicitly described as a Palestinian combatant. In some cases, however, the status of the victims is not specified, and it remains unuttered whether the victims are combatants or not (10.4% of the examined shaming posts from 2011-2016).[8]

Branding

As already shown, branding hardly plays a role in the external communication of the PIC. Among the few branding posts particularly many showcase the beauty of the Palestinian country and its towns (8 out of the 28 branding posts in the

7 In total, 21.6% of all posts in the sample from the Palestinian Information Center are shaming posts referring to physical violence. In contrast, even though the IDF is unlike the Palestinian Information Center a military entity, only 15.5% of all posts of the IDF sample are shaming posts referring to physical violence.

8 In some cases, also no concrete victim is mentioned, especially in cases of structural violence (31.9% of the examined shaming posts for 2011-2016).

sample, Jerusalem, in particular, is depicted often in these posts) and culture & crafting (4 out of the 28 branding posts in the sample). Many reference themes that could be observed in the IDF sample, in contrast, cannot be found on the English-speaking Facebook page of the PIC at all or at least only very rarely: e.g. there are no references to technology or innovation, economic attractiveness or major sports events and festivals. Many of the branding posts, furthermore, are connected with a resilience framing, i.e., the achievements are presented as being accomplished despite the difficult context.

5.2 Robustness check – Results of the automated quantitative large-scale content analysis and the semi-structured interviews

5.2.1 Variation across actors

To test whether the tendencies observed in the quantifying qualitative content analysis can also be observed over a longer timeframe and for all other channels of the conflict parties an automated quantitative large-scale content analysis was conducted. In the results of this additional analysis, the same tendencies can be observed for the variation of the selection of strategies of external communication across the different conflict parties as were observed in the quantifying qualitative analysis: The share of negative posts on Hamas' English-speaking social media channels and on the English-speaking social media channels of the PLO's & the PNA's different branches is much higher than the share of negative posts on the English-speaking social media channels coming from the State of Israel's different branches, regardless of the varying functions of the different branches in the governance systems of the conflict parties.

Additionally, interviews with the practitioners in charge of the social media channels and additional quantifying qualitative analyses were conducted. The results of both once again confirm the initial observations from the first quantifying qualitative analysis of the IDF's and the PIC's English-speaking Facebook pages: Across all branches, the Israeli external communication is dominated by branding and the Palestinian external communication by shaming. It is only the types of reference themes and the styles used for branding and shaming that vary according to the divergent functions of the different branches, when looking at the external communication on one of the sides of the conflict, not the dimension of the shares of branding and shaming.

5.2.1.1 State of Israel – Military bodies

General tendencies

For the IDF's English-speaking Facebook page the automated quantitative analysis shows the same trend like in the quantifying qualitative analysis of the samples: In 2016, the average monthly share of negative posts[9] on the IDF's English-speaking Facebook page amongst all of the published posts was 34.38%, i.e., comparatively low. Similarly, the interview with the IDF's spokesperson's unit shows that the unit has decided to focus primarily on content that can be characterized as branding.[10]

The analysis of COGAT's English-speaking Facebook page shows that the same trend can be observed for other branches of the Israeli military as well. The quantitative analysis of the posts on COGAT's Facebook page shows for 2016 that, on average, only 20.83% of all posts each month were negative. This means that the average of the monthly shares of negative posts on COGAT's English-speaking Facebook page is even lower than on the page of the IDF's spokesperson's unit. A quantifying qualitative analysis of COGAT's Facebook page and the interview with the spokesperson's unit of COGAT confirm this trend.

Branding

The Facebook page of COGAT is even more dominated by branding than the Facebook page of the IDF. While COGAT is attached to the IDF, it is in charge of the implementation of civilian policies and not directly in charge of military affairs. Consequently, in comparison to the IDF's spokesperson's unit the spokesperson's unit of COGAT focuses in its branding much less on military issues in the narrower sense. Instead, COGAT features in its branding posts mostly its support for the Palestinian civil population (67.9% of the examined branding posts from 2015-2016). The described measures of support include e.g. supporting the Palestinian agriculture by coordinating for example olive harvests,[11] the construction of in-

9 For each month the number of negative posts and the total number of posts were counted, and both numbers were used to calculate the monthly share for each month. The average monthly share for 2016 was calculated by summing up the monthly averages of all twelve months in 2016 and dividing them by twelve (i.e., the number of months).

10 In total the spokesperson's unit of the IDF has defined five categories as core themes: 1) describing threats & character of the enemies, 2) professionalism & capabilities of the IDF, 3) dealing with moral challenges, 4) innovation, start-up nation and technology, and 5) diversity (Isr IDF: 16ff.). Following the typology developed for this study (cf. chapter 2), the second, fourth and fifth category can be characterized as branding. The third category can be characterized as justification and partially as branding as well. And only the first category represents what has been defined as shaming in the typology.

11 Cf. e.g. COGAT on their English-speaking Facebook page (08.11.2017) (https://www.facebook.com/cogat.israel/videos/vb.724192144343139/1487182231377456/?type=2&theater) (source accessed on: 20.04.2018).

frastructure,[12] fostering the local economy,[13] facilitating the import and export of goods from the Palestinian Territories and issuing travel and work permits.[14]

Shaming

Shaming is even less present on COGAT's English-speaking Facebook page than on the English-speaking Facebook page of the IDF. Content-wise the shaming of COGAT is quite similar to the shaming of the IDF. The shaming of COGAT mostly mentions Hamas as the perpetrator and focuses especially on the (alleged) misdeeds that impede its work, such as the smuggling of dual-use goods into the Palestinian Territories or "incitement", for example. Notably, it can be observed that both the IDF and COGAT avoid using certain commonly used but sensitive conflict-related terms. Both, for example, do not use the term "settlers" and speak of "Judea and Samaria" instead of using the term "West Bank".

5.2.1.2 State of Israel – Civilian branches

General tendencies

For the civilian branches of the State of Israel's administration, the same tendency can be observed as in the military branches: The share of shaming posts is comparatively low, whereas the share of branding posts, in contrast, is very high. In 2016, the automated quantitative analysis shows that the average of the monthly shares of negative posts was 19.59% on the Israeli Foreign Ministry's English-speaking Facebook page, on the Israeli Prime Minister's Office's English-speaking Facebook page 38.10%,[15] on the Government Press Office's English-speaking Facebook page 14.90% and on the Permanent Mission of the State of Israel to the United Nations'

12 Cf. e.g. COGAT on their English-speaking Facebook page (10.11.2015) (https://www.facebook.com/cogat.israel/photos/a.757361664359520.1073741828.724192144343139/902768309818854/?type=3) (source accessed on: 20.04.2018).

13 Cf. e.g. COGAT on their English-speaking Facebook page (26.10.2016) (https://www.facebook.com/cogat.israel/photos/a.757361664359520.1073741828.724192144343139/1128000777295605/?type=3&theater) (source accessed on: 20.04.2018).

14 Cf. e.g. COGAT on their English-speaking Facebook page (20.11.2017) (https://www.facebook.com/cogat.israel/posts/1497439490351730) (source accessed on: 20.04.2018).

15 The highest, but in comparison to the Palestinian side still low, share of shaming posts among the examined Facebook pages of the civilian branches of the Israeli administration can be observed for the English-speaking Facebook page of the Prime Minister's Office. The slightly higher negativity on the page of the Prime Minister's Office can be traced back to the fact that the Prime Minister's Office among the branches whose communication has been analyzed is typically considered to be the most (party-)political branch and, therefore, its external communication also differentiates a bit less clearly between domestic and external audiences in comparison to the other branches on their pages. Furthermore, the page also refers comparatively often to Iran, i.e., to a non-asymmetric opponent. Moreover, the texts of the posts on the Facebook page are most of the time much longer than the texts on the other social

English-speaking Facebook page 34.45%. The quantifying qualitative analysis of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Facebook page as well as the interviews with the corresponding practitioners, that were conducted for additional robustness checks, can confirm this trend, too.

Branding

While all of the examined Israeli social media channels are dominated by branding, the type of reference themes used for branding and respectively shaming varies according to the divergent functions of the different branches: In contrast to the IDF Facebook page, military-related branding does not play a role on the Facebook pages of the civilian branches of the Israeli administration. Fitting to their representative functions, in contrast, international cooperation is used much more often as a reference theme for branding on the Facebook pages of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. Other themes that are often used on the English-speaking Facebook page of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs are, for example, references to arts and cultural events (15.5% of all branding posts in the examined sample from 2009-2016), health-related topics and medical technology (4.4% of all branding posts in the examined sample from 2009-2016), efforts for sustainability and green technology (3.8% of all branding posts in the examined sample for 2009-2016, with increasing frequency in the last years) and Israel's economic attractiveness, innovation and other technological achievements (14.9% of all branding posts in the examined sample from 2009-2016). Like in the IDF's external communication, furthermore, the humanitarian aid of Israel (11.0% of all branding posts in the examined sample from 2009-2016), sports (2.0 % of all branding posts in the examined sample from 2009-2016) and tradition (16.7% of all branding posts in the examined sample from 2009-2016) are frequently used themes for branding on the English-speaking Facebook page of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Shaming

In general, the types of shaming themes that can be observed on the Facebook pages of the civilian branches of the Israeli administration are comparatively similar to those on the Facebook pages of the military branches. However, the shaming is partially directed to additional actors like, for example, the United Nations or other states that are shamed for a behavior contradicting with what Israel perceives as their interests. Iran, in particular, with which Israel has a hostile relationship, is a frequent target of shaming. In the sample from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, in particular, there are many references to Iran (9.4% of all posts from the sample

media channels. This increases also the likelihood that at least a small passage of the text is referring to something negative.

for 2010-2016, with particularly many references in 2012, 2013 and 2014) can be found.

5.2.1.3 Palestine – Hamas

General tendencies

For the Palestinian Information Center's (PIC) English-speaking Facebook page the automated quantitative analysis shows the same trend as can be observed in the quantifying qualitative analysis of the samples: The average of negative posts shared monthly on the PIC's English-speaking Facebook page was 73.26%, i.e., very high, in 2016. Hamas does not have Facebook pages that do use the name of the organization or the name of its military arm al-Qassam Brigades, as this is not tolerated by Facebook and corresponding social media channels would be suspended by the social media platform (Times of Israel 08.01.2017). However, Hamas has set up corresponding English-speaking channels on Twitter. For these channels the same tendencies can be observed as for the PIC's English-speaking Facebook page. The average of the monthly shares of negative posts on the English-speaking "Hamas Movement (@HamasInfoEn)" Twitter channel was 61.74% for 2016, i.e., like the shares on the English-speaking Facebook page of the PIC much higher than the average of all examined Israeli channels. The average of the monthly sharing of negative posts on the English-speaking Twitter channel of the al-Qassam Brigades in 2016,[16] that was identified with the automated quantitative analysis, was very high (83.42%), too. Moreover, a quantifying qualitative analysis of the Facebook page of the PIC and of the "@HamasInfoEn" Twitter channel confirms the trend of a strong dominance of shaming, too.

Shaming

The type of shaming used on the "@HamasInfoEn" Twitter channel is very similar to the shaming used on the PIC's English-speaking Facebook page concerning the described types of victims and (alleged) misdeeds. Concerning the described perpetrator, the Twitter channel of Hamas is often less specific than the English-speaking Facebook page of the Palestinian Information Center and generally accuses Israel as a whole instead of only its army or administration (in 73.5% of the examined shaming posts from 2015-2016). Stylistically, moreover, the shaming on the "@HamasInfoEn" Twitter channel is often also connected to demanding formulations.

16 The channel, however, was not continuously active, as the Twitter channel of the al-Qassam Brigades has been suspended several times. Yet, after the suspension each time the organization has set up a new channel with a slightly different user name (Christian Science Monitor 17.07.2014; Times of Israel 08.01.2017; BBC 15.07.2014).

Branding

While the PIC on its English-speaking Facebook page in its very few branding posts focuses on the beauty of the Palestinian country and its towns and on featuring its culture and crafting, Hamas focuses in the few branding posts on its official "@HamasInfoEn" Twitter channel on its international cooperation. The corresponding posts showcase meetings of Hamas officials with representatives of governments of other countries and, thereby, support Hamas' demand to be recognized internationally as a stakeholder in negotiations. Rather trying to avoid showcasing the affiliation with Hamas, corresponding efforts are more subtle on the English-speaking Facebook page of the PIC.

5.2.1.4 Palestine – PLO & PNA

General tendencies

The same trends as on the social media channels of Hamas and its branches can be also observed for the different social media channels of the PLO & the PNA: Their external communication is strongly dominated by shaming. The automated quantitative content analysis shows that the average of the monthly shares of negative posts was 66.03% on the English-speaking Facebook page of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nation in 2016 (about twice as much as the share of the Israeli mission), for the English-speaking Facebook page of the Department of Culture and Information of the PLO (which recently was renamed to "Department of Public Diplomacy & Policy") 85.80% and for the English-speaking Twitter channel of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO 58.42%. A quantifying qualitative analysis of Facebook pages of both the Department of Culture and Information of the PLO and of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and the interviews with the practitioners from the PLO & the PNA confirm this trend, too.

Shaming

The type of shaming used on the different social media channels of both the PLO & the PNA is quite similar to the type of shaming used on the social media channels of Hamas and its branches. In general, the external communication expresses a strong dissatisfaction with the status quo.[17] The Department of Culture and Information of the PLO does not only target Israel but occasionally also the US government and Pro-Israeli groups and politicians in the USA (like especially the current US president and in 2016 presidential candidate respectively president-elect

17 Cf. e.g. the Department of Culture and Information of the PLO (PLO-DCI) on their English-speaking Facebook page (17.10.2016) (https://www.facebook.com/PLO.DPDP/posts/983798701742314) (source accessed on: 29.04.2019).

Donald Trump). Occasionally, the PLO channels also complain about the (alleged) inactivity of the United Nations and the international community to support their cause and pressurize Israel.

Branding

In contrast to the Israeli side, even in the few posts in which something positive is described, the positive issue is typically framed as an expression of "resilience": Palestine is able to achieve "despite" the conditions of the occupation and the conflict, that are problematic for it, not "because of" them (PLO MA: 119). The content of the branding varies a bit from branch to branch. The Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, for example, highlights mostly political successes like the recognition of the State of Palestine by international organizations and other countries. On the English-speaking Facebook page of the Department of Culture and Information of the PLO (which recently was renamed to "Department of Public Diplomacy & Policy"), in contrast, mostly arts and culture and international cooperation are featured in the few branding posts of the department.

5.2.1.5 First conclusions

The empirical analyses clearly show the trend that the Israeli external communication is dominated by branding across all channels and that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming. Furthermore, it can be observed that the actors generally select for their branding and shaming pictures and stories that are particularly promising (cf. the types of pictures and stories that have been identified to be particularly promising in section 2.2.): For shaming, especially if this is chosen as the predominant strategy, pictures and stories representing particularly extreme acts of physical violence and pictures and stories representing such structural violence and disadvantages that are perceived as injustices are used and particularly often civilians are depicted as victims. For branding, especially, if it is the predominant strategy, pictures and stories that can be characterized as pictures and stories featuring something that makes it easy for the target audience to identify itself with the communicating actor (e.g. pictures and stories showing soldiers from a personal side), as pictures and stories that credibly signal to the target audience a significant potential benefit for itself (e.g. pictures and stories about economic attractiveness and international cooperation) or as pictures and stories featuring something that stands out from the average and which is particularly prestigious or is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative (e.g. pictures and stories about technology and innovation) are used. Furthermore, it shall later be shown that the types of pictures and stories which can be observed in the conflict parties' external communication match very well with the opportu-

nities to present and convince of the different conflict parties (cf. section 7.6.4.).

Table 9: Overview – Results of the automated quantitative analysis: monthly shares of negative posts on the English-speaking Facebook pages of the conflict parties for January until December 2016 (a dark grey color indicates a high share of negative posts, a light grey color indicates a low share of negative posts)

Type of branch	Channel	Share of negative posts	Channel	Share of negative posts	Channel	Share of negative posts
	State of Israel		**PNA / PLO**		**Hamas**	
Military branch	IDF	34.38%	no English-speaking social media channel		EQB (Twitter)	83.42%
	COGAT	20.83%				
Leadership	PMO	38.10%	no English-speaking social media channel		Hamas (Twitter)	61.74%
External relations / press relations	MFA	19.59%	PLO NAD (Twitter)	58.42%	PIC	73.26%
	GPO	14.90%	PLO DCI (now PDPD)	85.80%		
Missions abroad	Israel UN	34.45%	Palestine UN	66.03%	no channels of official representations	

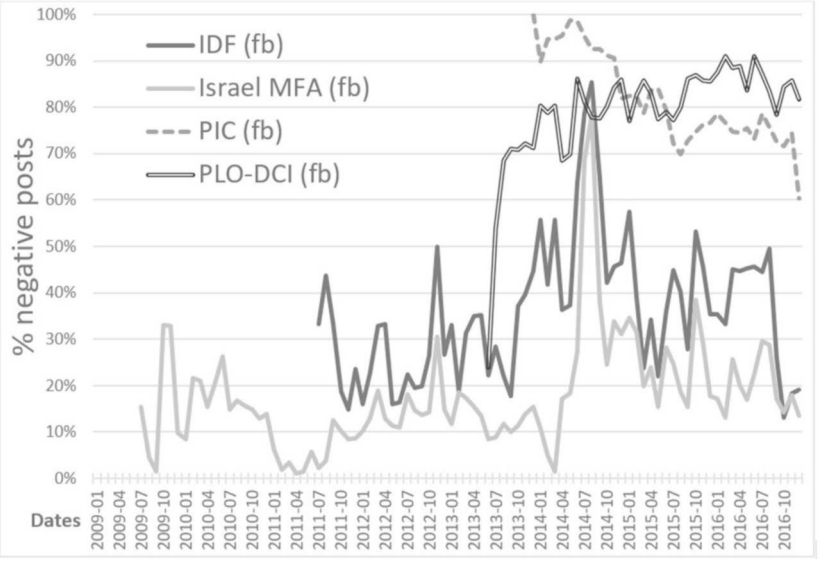
5.2.2 Variation across time

Furthermore, the automated quantitative analysis also shows that the trends described above cannot only be observed punctually but also across time for almost all stages of the conflict:

The Palestinian external communication (of Hamas as well as of the PLO & the PNA) is constantly dominated by negative communication: The monthly shares of negative posts on the Facebook pages of both the Palestinian Information Center, and the Department of Culture and Information of the PLO amount constantly to values around 80%. Only in the early stages of the Facebook pages and during the relatively calm end of 2016 a lower share of negative posts was published (cf. figure 15).

The external communication of the Israeli side (of military as well as of civilian branches), in contrast, is characterized almost all of the time by low shares of negative posts: Most of the time the monthly shares of posts with negative content on the Facebook pages of the IDF and the Israeli Foreign Ministry are lower than 40% and only rarely the shares are higher than 60% (cf. figure 15).

Figure 15: Overview – Results of the automated quantitative analysis: (smoothed[18]) monthly shares of negative posts on the English-speaking Facebook pages of the conflict parties across time



There are only a few exceptions to be observed, in which the Israeli external communication is as negative as the Palestinian one: Only during the summer of 2014 (the period of the 2014 Gaza War with the Israeli Operation Protective Edge) a short stage exists, during which the external communication is as negative as the Palestinian one. Further prominent local maxima of negativity in the external communication on the Israeli side can be observed for November 2012 (during the Israeli Operation Pillar of Defense) and autumn 2015 / early 2016 (during peaks of the "stabbing intifada").[19]

The types of branding and shaming used on the different channels remain comparatively constant. However, especially for branding thematic trends do play a mi-

18 Exponential smoothing with the data processing function of Microsoft Excel was applied (https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/use-the-analysis-toolpak-to-perform-complex-data-analysis-6c67ccf0-f4a9-487c-8dec-bdb5a2cefab6; last access: 26.07.2019). A smoothing constant of $\alpha = 0.3$ was used.

19 Especially, the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and the Mission of the State of Israel to the United Nations in New York thematize regularly also the adversaries of Israel with Iran. Therefore, on the corresponding channels, additional notable local maxima can be observed in the context of events related to these adversaries.

nor role temporarily. In 2015, for example, in the context of the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP21 in Paris sustainability was used more often as a reference theme for branding than usual. In general, however, the biggest adaptations in the external communication of the conflict parties have not been content-wise adaptations but rather stylistic ones: Most importantly, especially the Israeli branches have over time started to invest more in videography and to try to increase the share of video content among the posts they publish (e.g. Isr IDF: 89ff.).

5.2.3 Variation across platforms

Moreover, the automated quantitative analysis also shows that the trends observed in sections 5.1. and 5.2. are not only to be observed across channels and time but also across platforms:

Similar to the English-speaking Facebook pages the English-speaking Twitter channels of the Palestinian conflict parties are strongly dominated by shaming. In 2016, on average 58.42% of the tweets on the English-speaking Twitter channel of the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department were negative and 44.35% of the tweets on the Twitter channel of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York were negative.[20] This means that in 2016 the mean values of the monthly shares of negative posts for both analyzed PLO/PNA Twitter channels are higher than the mean values of the monthly shares of negative posts for all analyzed Israeli channels. As already mentioned in section 5.2.1.3., the English-speaking Twitter channels of Hamas and the al-Qassam Brigades had very high averages of the monthly shares of negative posts (61.74% respectively 83.42%) as well.

The average shares of negative tweets on the Israeli side, in contrast, are comparatively low: An automated quantitative analysis was conducted for two English-speaking Twitter channels of branches of the State of Israel, a military branch and a civilian branch. Similar to the previously examined Israeli Facebook pages, both Twitter channels have comparatively low average shares of negative posts: In 2016, on average 41.22% of the tweets on the English-speaking Twitter channel of the Israeli Defense Forces were negative and 20.63% of the tweets on the English-speaking Twitter channel of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs were negative (cf. table 10).

20 The average of the monthly shares of negative posts on the English-speaking Twitter channel of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York is lower than the average monthly share of negative posts on other Palestinian channels. The reason for this is, however, that comparatively many announcements with linked attachments were posted on this channel, in which the actual message (and, therefore, also content such as, for instance, shaming messages) can be found in the attachment.

On the Israeli side, it can be observed that the content on the Twitter channels of the different branches has a tendency to be slightly more negative than the content on the Facebook pages of the same branches. These very moderate differences can be explained with the trend that Twitter as a platform tends to be a bit more political than Facebook.[21] In general, however, the differences across platforms are mostly quite small and variations across platforms tend to be much smaller than the variations across the two sides of the conflict (cf. table 10).

The interviews with the practitioners in charge of the social media channels confirm that the messages they use on different platforms hardly vary. Considering the external communication of its unit as "theme-driven" (Isr IDF: 98), for example, a high-ranking member of the IDF spokesperson's unit reports that only the style, not the content, of the IDF's messages vary across different social media platforms: Adapting to the stylistic preferences of the users of the platform, for Snapchat the IDF aims for a "behind the scenes" atmosphere. The member of the spokesperson's unit described the presentation style as "Kim Kardashian type": "You know this is what we do. And this is how we are. And hi guys, this is the IDF, welcome. And get the behind the scenes with the IDF and how it is to be a paratrooper. Different types of things like that. So I would say each one has its own unique packaging" (Isr IDF: 103). On Facebook, in contrast, the unit tries to be "a bit more friendly and formal" and "welcoming, appealing". And on Twitter, the unit primarily aims to have a "very informative" channel with lots of "facts and figures" (Isr IDF: 102). In general, however, the same stories are published on each channel, "produced in a different manner. And it will go out simultaneously. So you would see the same type of information going out, same times, but in different ways that are appealing to others" (Isr IDF: 104).

21 Indeed, for example, the practitioner in charge of the external communication of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Kingdom describes Twitter as a platform that is comparatively political (Pal UK: 33). And the practitioners of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs characterize Twitter as a more political platform than, for example, Facebook, too (Isr MFA 2: 19). Similarly, the practitioner in charge of the external communication of the Permanent Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York assesses Twitter as a platform that in the context of their work is closely linked to the social media culture of the other missions to the United Nations, which typically act quite politically (Pal UN: 33). The audience on Facebook, in contrast, is perceived as a broader and, therefore, on average less political audience (Pal UK: 34).

Table 10: Overview – Results of the automated quantitative analysis: monthly shares of negative posts on the English-speaking Twitter channels and Facebook pages of the conflict parties for January until December 2016 (a dark grey color indicates a high share of negative posts, a light grey color indicates a low share of negative posts)

Channel	Facebook	Twitter
State of Israel		
IDF	34.38%	41.22%
COGAT	20.83%	not analyzed
PMO	38.10%	not analyzed
MFA	19.59%	20.63%
GPO	14.90%	not analyzed
Israel UN	34.45%	not analyzed
PNA / PLO		
PLO NAD	no channel	58.42%
PLO DCI (now PDPD)	85.80%	not analyzed
Palestine UN	66.03%	44.35%
Hamas		
EQB	no channel	83.42%
Hamas	no channel	61.74%
PIC	73.30%	not analyzed

Empirics II – The impact of the operational environment on the selection of the strategy of external communication in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

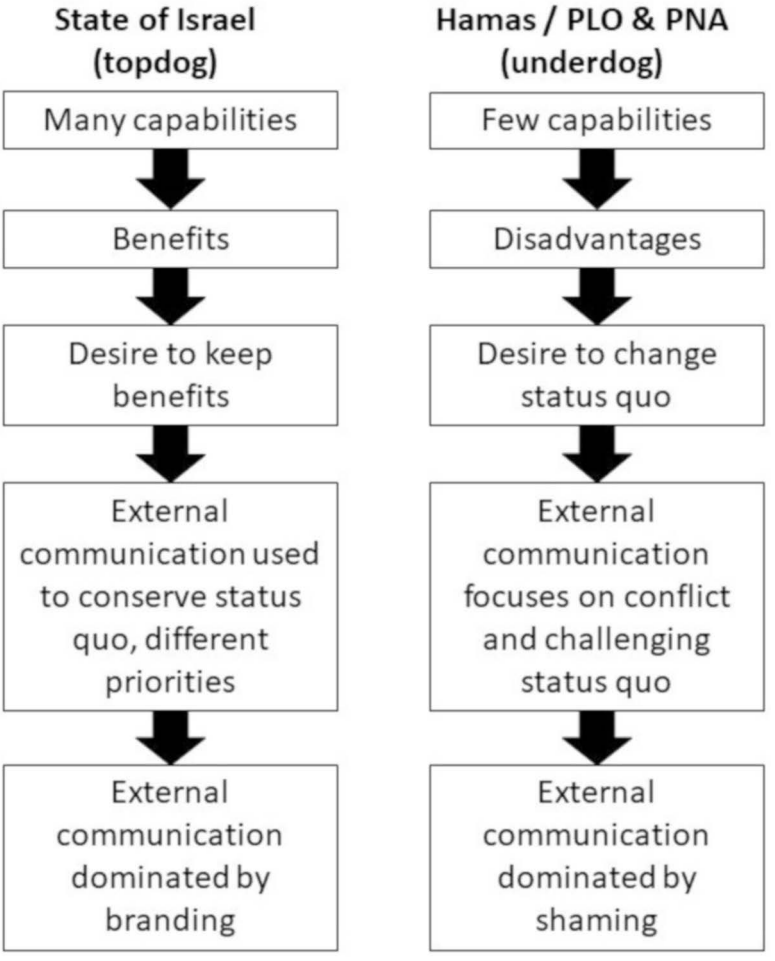
6. Empirics II – Interests

The following chapter demonstrates, using the conflict in Israel and Palestine as a case study, that an asymmetric conflict structure shapes divergent interests of the conflict parties involved in the conflict and that the divergent interests, in turn, influence the selection of strategies of external communication of the conflict parties:

The Palestinian side has few capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.). Consequently, the conflict structure imposes a series of disadvantages on them: They have lesser territorial and governmental control than the Israeli side, much less wealth and recognition, as well as worse access to the international community (section 6.1.1.). Having many disadvantages, the Palestinian side is strongly dissatisfied with the status quo of the conflict. The conflict and challenging the status quo (section 6.1.2.) are, therefore, the single priorities for their external communication (section 6.1.3.). As shaming is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to challenge the status quo and to focus on the conflict, the Palestinian side chooses a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.1.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

The Israeli side, in contrast, has many capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.). Consequently, the conflict structure offers for them benefits, rather than disadvantages: They can profit, unlike their Palestinian counterparts, from benefits such as political and military control, economic wealth and good connections with powerful nations of the international community (section 6.1.1.). The Israeli side is, for this reason, comparatively satisfied with the status quo, as it can enjoy various benefits from having a lot of capabilities. It is, therefore, interested in defending these privileges (section 6.1.2.). Instead of focusing only on the conflict, for this reason, Israel aims to safeguard its various benefits with its external communication. For example, it tries to use its external communication to safeguard and foster the Israeli economy and Israel's international status (section 6.1.3.). As branding is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to showcase and promote, safeguard and foster Israel's not conflict-related strengths, the Israeli side chooses a branding-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.1.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

Figure 16: Overview – The prioritization pathway in the conflict in Israel and Palestine



After demonstrating how the distribution of capabilities in general shapes the interests of the conflict parties and, in this way, the selection of external communication strategies (section 6.1.), additionally, the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities (section 6.2.) and the distribution of social/institutional capabilities (section 6.3.) on the interests of the conflict parties and on the selection of external communication strategies are explored in detail.

6.1 General pattern – Interests resulting from the distribution of capabilities

6.1.1 Benefits & disadvantages resulting from the distribution of capabilities

Having few capabilities imposes disadvantages on the Palestinian side as underdogs. Having many capabilities, in contrast, offers benefits for the Israeli side as the topdog:

Disadvantages for the Palestinian side

The Palestinian actors have transversally significantly fewer capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.). Having only few capabilities means that the conflict structure offers for them severe disadvantages and no
benefits for the Palestinian side. A consequence of having fewer military capabilities is that they enjoy lesser territorial and governmental control. While Hamas controls the Gaza Strip (Brown 2012: 1) and the PLO & the PNA parts of the West Bank, large parts of the West Bank remain controlled by Israel (OCHA 2019) and Israel controls the access to the Gaza Strip by air, sea and (together with Egypt) by land (Shlaim 2009). A consequence of having fewer economic & financial capabilities is that the Palestinian side enjoys less wealth than the Israeli side as topdog. While the Israeli economy is comparatively developed, the Palestinian economy is still confronted with a lot of challenges and, as the Palestinian side has less military control, they are more aggrieved by the implications of the conflict (UNSCO 2017: 2; Office of the Quartet 2018; Berzak 2013: 109). While the standard of living is comparatively high in Israel, poverty and unemployment are significantly higher in the Palestinian territories (UNDP 2016). And having less social/institutional capabilities means for the Palestinian side a lack of international recognition. While held out in prospect, a fully recognized statehood remains denied to the Palestinians (cf. e.g. Reuters 31.12.2014; Times of Israel 15.01.2019). Hamas lacks recognition even more and is listed in many countries as a terror organization.[1]

Benefits for the Israeli side

As shown in section 4.1.2., in comparison to the Palestinian side the State of Israel has transversally significantly more capabilities. Having these capabilities offers the Israeli side a series of benefits: Having one of the strongest and best-trained

1 Most notably, the United States (US Department of State – Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism 2018) and the European Union (Council of the European Union (27.01.2017): Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/154) have deemed Hamas as a whole as a terror organization and have, therefore, imposed sanctions against the group.

armies in the world (IISS 2017: 382) and, therefore, much more military capabilities than the Palestinian side gives the Israeli government more political power and control in the conflict region, thus making it possible to control large areas of Palestinian territory (OCHA 2019). Having more economic & financial capabilities and, therefore, a stronger economy, makes Israel a relatively wealthy country and allows the Israeli population to enjoy a comparatively high standard of living (UNDP 2016; cf. also sections 4.1.2.2. and 6.2.1.). Having more social/institutional capabilities, furthermore, gives them a high social status in the international community: Israel is recognized as a full member of the United Nations and has good connections with powerful nations of the international community like for example the United States. From those allies it receives a lot of support (Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 30ff.; cf. also sections 4.1.2.3. and 6.3.1.) as well as.

6.1.2 (Dis)satisfaction with the status quo

The Palestinian side has a strong desire to overcome the status quo, which imposes disadvantages on them. The Israeli side, in contrast, is comparatively satisfied with the status quo and has the desire to keep the benefits the status quo provides:

Dissatisfaction of the Palestinian side with the status quo

The disadvantages described in section 6.1.1., such as the low level of territorial control, comparative poverty and a lack of international recognition, are all reasons for the Palestinian actors as less powerful conflict parties of the asymmetric conflict to be dissatisfied with the status quo. Indeed, this dissatisfaction is expressed in the external communication on social media and has also been expressed by the interviewed officials that are in charge of the official Palestinian social media channels. The disparity fuels a strong feeling of injustice, not only within the Palestinian leadership and administration but also within the Palestinian population in general. The data of the Global Indicators Database of the Pew Research Center shows also a high level of dissatisfaction amongst the Palestinian population. Being asked the question "How satisfied are you with your country's direction?" in 2014 only 15% of all interviewees in the Palestinian Territories were satisfied with the direction of their country, a value comparable with the values of other countries with a severe economic and/or political crisis. Whilst the levels of satisfaction have seen certain fluctuations across the years, similarly low levels of satisfaction amongst the Palestinian population could be observed in the previous years in which the survey was conducted as well (Pew Research Center 2014). The dissatisfaction with the status quo is also particularly high due to the high visibility of the conflict for the Pales-

tinian population (including the administration[2]) in their daily lives. Especially, the security wall within Palestinian territory, the regulation of travel, checkpoints, raids and patrols carried out by Israeli military and security forces make the conflict particularly visible for the Palestinian population. Possibly one of the most drastic indications of the Palestinian dissatisfaction, and partially even disillusion, is a particularly high willingness to sacrifice (cf. e.g. Holt 2018).

The high dissatisfaction fuels a strong desire to overcome the status quo, amongst Palestinian elites as well as the general population. The Palestinian side, therefore, has a strong interest to initiate a challenge against the status quo (as predicted theoretically by Ordóñez 2017: 53; Paul 1994: 129; Geller 2000: 89[3]; Daase 1999: 94): The Palestinian side wants to take over full political and military control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Some radical factions even have the desire to control the territory of the State of Israel as well. The Palestinians want to enjoy a level of wealth that is, at least, similar to the one Israel enjoys at the moment. They also want to finally be a fully recognized Palestinian state. On the one hand, the desire is a political desire, which is the urge to overcome a power-politically (from a perspective of relative power as well as from a perspective of absolute power) disadvantageous status quo. On the other hand, (from a perspective of individual everyday needs), the high levels of dissatisfaction within the population impose domestic pressure on the leadership to ensure that overcoming the status quo becomes a priority. Consequentially, being a core interest and desire, the conflict and its (perceived) injustices for the Palestinians and the demand to overcome the deficits of the status quo are made up by the Palestinian conflict parties to be the single number one priority of their external communication as well.[4]

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2 Cf. e.g. the statement of Saeb Erikat, a senior negotiator of the PLO, on BR B5 Aktuell (24.12.2018: from 15:40 min) (in contrast to the Israeli satisfaction, expressed in the same radio broadcast later by Michael Oren (18:18 min)) or the various complaints Palestinian officials expressed in the interviews conducted for this study (cf. e.g. PLO MA: 121).

3 Geller, however, focuses only on (unequal) state actors (Geller 2000).

4 This expectation fits well to the observations of social psychologists examining the interactions and communicative behavior of the participants of encounters involving participants from both sides of the asymmetric conflict, the Israeli and the Arab/Palestinian side: When examining encounters of teachers from both sides of the conflict, Ifat Maoz observed that the two sides showed interest in different topics. The Israeli side (as topdog) was dominant when the discussions were focusing on educational, not conflict-related topics, while the Arab/Palestinian side in this case tended to be more passive. In contrast, when focusing on the conflict, the Arab/Palestinian side (as the underdog) became dominant (Maoz 2000: 266ff.). Another study of Maoz shows that in general encounters using a "confrontational" approach, where typically the discussion focuses on the conflict, participants from the Arab/Palestinian side are more dominant than in encounters using a coexistence approach, which focuses less on the conflict (Maoz 2011: 118ff.).

Satisfaction of the Israeli side with the status quo

Enjoying all the benefits described in section 6.1.1., such as a high level of political and territorial control, economic wealth and a comparatively high level of international recognition, makes the status quo for the Israeli side as the topdog (despite the experience of occasional violence and the high monetary costs of the conflict in the form of high expenditures for military and defense) much more acceptable and convenient than for their underdog opponents, both from a power-political perspective and the perspective of the needs of the population. Indeed, the Israeli population is much more satisfied with the status quo, as the data from the Global Indicators Database of the Pew Research Center show. Being asked the question "How satisfied are you with your country's direction?" in 2014 49% of all interviewed Israelis answered that they were satisfied with the direction of their country, a comparatively high value, higher for example than the levels of satisfaction in the UK and the USA and much higher than the 15% on the Palestinian side who gave this answer. While the levels of satisfaction have certain fluctuations across the years, a similar ratio between the levels of satisfaction of the Israeli and the Palestinian side could be observed across all of the years (Pew Research Center 2014). A reason for the lower level of dissatisfaction with the status quo might also be that the visibility of the conflict (at least in routine times) is comparatively low for the Israeli population. Despite occasional rocket and terror attacks, partially heavily weaponized security forces in public (a scene which, since the terror attacks of groups such as Al Qaeda and Daesh, however, is common in European capitals such as Paris or Brussels as well) and the comprehensive military service, which is obligatory for women and men, the conflict is much less visible within the actual territory of the State of Israel, where the population can live a life without major limitations caused by the conflict most of the time.

The majority of the political leadership of the State of Israel has also arranged itself to work with the status quo. The political leadership has shown no serious efforts to overcome the status quo over the last years. The governments led by the current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have conserved the status quo.[5] Whilst avoiding escalation, Netanyahu and his governments have not considered conflict resolution and peace negotiations to be a priority,[6] though the Oslo Accords

5 The assessment that Prime Minister Netanyahu and his policies have contributed to conserving the status quo is shared by Israeli (e.g. Globes 27.09.2018), rather Pro-Palestinian (e.g. the Israeli but very critical +972 Magazine 30.10.2014) and international sources (e.g. BR B5 Aktuell 24.12.2018: 18:18 min).

6 Cf. e.g. BR B5 Aktuell (24.12.2018: min 17:30) Michael Oren (former Israeli ambassador to the USA, member of the Knesset for the Kulanu party and Deputy Minister in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office) in a radio interview arguing that peace negotiations are neither a priority for the Israeli government nor for the Israeli population, quoting polls that peace negotiations are only for 4% of the Israeli population an important issue.

would actually require further actions (Foreign Policy 13.09.2018). Some news outlets have even given Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, the nickname "Mr. Status Quo" (e.g. Haaretz 27.09.2014; Foreign Policy 10.11.2015). The status quo approach proved to also be successful in domestic politics. Since 2009 Netanyahu could convince the Israeli mainstream with this strategy and win with his Likud party since 2009 four elections in a row (2009, 2013, 2015 & 2019)[7] and has since served as Prime Minister (despite being confronted with corruption scandals and relying on various coalition partners with partially strong interests of their own)[8]. As of June 2019, this makes Netanyahu the second-longest serving Prime Minister of the State of Israel, only slightly surpassed by David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founding father and national hero (Knesset 2017; i24News 05.02.2019).[9]

In conclusion, in contrast to their underdog opponents, being comparatively satisfied with the status quo, Israel as the topdog has an interest in keeping the status quo (as was expected also theoretically by Gallo & Marzano 2009: 6; Wirtz 2012: 9; Daase 1999: 94). Having many capabilities means that the Israeli side can profit from the related benefits. Enjoying benefits, however, also mean that the Israeli side, as the topdog, has something to lose. This places Israel in the position of a challenged actor. For this reason, the Israeli side has an interest in defending and maintaining (or, if possible, even expanding) these privileges.[10] As it will be shown in sections 6.2. and 6.3., Israel's privileges resulting from its high economic & financial status and its high social/institutional status tend to be especially vulnerable and need to be defended. Having to take care of these privileges means also that, in contrast to their underdog opponents, the Israeli side also has other topics that matter to them besides the conflict. This does not mean that the conflict is not an important topic for the Israeli side at all. As mentioned, the conflict can also be experienced by the Israeli population (especially during the extensive military service, in the border region and in the form of the strong presence of heavenly armed soldiers and security forces in the public) and, it does remain a relevant topic for the Israeli side. As it, however, is not as omnipresent for the Israeli side than it is for the Palestinian side and a comparatively normal and secure life remains possible within the area of the State of Israel, for the Israeli side the conflict is by far not the

7 For the historical voting results cf. IPU 2013 or Knesset 2019.

8 Cf. Reuters 14.02.2019.

9 If still in office, Netanyahu will tie Gurion on the 16th of July 2019. (Update: As of 30.12.2020, Netanyahu is still the Prime Minister of Israel. This makes him the longest-serving Prime Minister of Israel. While it proofed to be difficult to form a stable governing coalition after the elections in April 2019 and snap elections were held in September 2019 and March 2020, Natanyahu's Likud Party remained the strongest party in the elections in April 2019 and 2020. Source: https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/mk/pages/elections.aspx, accessed on: 30.12.2020).

10 Indeed, the fear of losses on the Israeli side as topdog has been identified as a key obstacle for conflict resolution in the conflict in Israel and Palestine (Haaretz 04.07.2014; Shalit 1994).

only topic and not even necessarily the priority number one. Quite the opposite, needing to take care of other issues as well safeguarding its status and the related privileges, the country needs to focus on other important topics such as fostering its economic and diplomatic relations.[11]

6.1.3 The selection of strategies of external communication based on interests in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

Having the desire to overcome the status quo, the Palestinian conflict parties adapt their external communication in a way serving this purpose: They feature the conflict in their external communication as the single most important topic, emphasizing the severity and uniqueness of the conflict. The Israeli side, in contrast, profiting from benefits and, therefore, having the desire to keep these benefits and to conserve the status quo adapts their external communication to these very different interests: The Israeli side tries to feature its achievements and to sideline and normalize the conflict.

Palestine – The conflict as the single number one priority topic and securitization of the conflict

As the biggest interest and, the by far biggest priority, of the Palestinian side is to overcome the status quo and the limitations and disadvantages which result from being the underdog in an asymmetric conflict, the Palestinian conflict parties also adapt their external communication in a way that best serves this purpose: To attract as much attention as possible for their core cause they focus their external communication on the conflict, criticizing their opponent Israel and the negative implications of Israeli actions on the Palestinian side. No other topic is perceived as equally important as the conflict for the Palestinian side – criticizing Israel and its actions are dedicated far more attention than any other topic. By raising awareness for this topic, the Palestinian side aims to stimulate international pressure on the Israeli side, thus overcoming the status quo.

The following statements from the interviews conducted with Palestinian practitioners demonstrate vividly that their selection of external communication is, indeed, based on a corresponding prioritization and that this is justified by the negative implications of the conflict for the Palestinian population:

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11 For the Israeli population the conflict is less visible. Therefore, also the Israeli government can expect lower domestic pressure to focus exclusively on the topic. Indeed, Halabi and Sonnenschein argue that it is even uncomfortable for the Israeli population to think and discuss about the conflict, as doing so might raise issues resulting from the position of dominance challenging their positive self-image (Halabi & Sonnenschein 2004: 380).

Reporting on the conflict and the negative implications on the Palestinians such as the human rights violations (or alleged violations) are perceived by the practitioners as the absolute priority, as these aspects persistently and immediately affect the life of the Palestinian population. A media advisor of the PLO e.g. argues: "Human rights violations infiltrate every part of our life. Whether it's the amount of water we have, whether it's the ability to move around, whether it's finding adequate jobs because the economy's being destroyed. That's the message, that is a human message and that's consistent" (PLO MA: 94).

The option to not to refer to the conflict and the problems resulting from the conflict in the Palestinian external communication, in contrast, is described by the practitioners, such as e.g. the person in charge of the Palestinian Mission to the United Kingdom's social media work, as out of touch with the problems in the real world and grotesque. They even compare the option not to report about the conflict (or not that much) with a story attributed to the French queen Marie Antoinette. Allegedly whilst the population was demanding bread to have something to eat, during the times of the French Revolution the queen asked, why they did not simply eat cake instead. Not focusing on the conflict would be like to imitate the alleged behavior of the French queen: "it's like, 'Let them eat cake'. It's like, you know, in the French Revolution when Marie Antoinette said … 'They want bread' … 'Oh, let them eat cake.'" (Pal UK: 123).

Whilst the Palestinian side would also have nice achievements to show off, such as their tradition and culture, against the backdrop of the disadvantages and the resulting desire to overcome the status quo of the Palestinian side, to promote these achievements is simply not deemed as being as equally important by the Palestinian practitioners:

The person in charge of the Palestinian Mission in the United Kingdom's social media work argues: "It's like this idea that you can't say, look how wonderful we are, look, we can sing and dance and we can make nice food. And we can do these wonderful rap face-offs [~~and have own Palestinian …~~] But when, in fact, the basic things are being torn away from us, day in, day out, and you're under occupation, children are being arrested, you know what I mean, in a sense of the authenticity of yeah, you can have a strategy to … But it's this idea of, if you're hungry, you've got to shout about it. If you haven't got your basic human rights, you've got to make that known. And that's why, I suppose, all these resistance groups use that, because they're saying there is an injustice here. You can't mask that. The people who have the power, who have the money, yes, have also time to do theater, to make music, and to make wonderful videos about how wonderful they are. Again, I think it's linked back. It's not just about immediate issue, it's linked back to key political and also, economic issues. It's a product" (Pal UK: 202-203).

Similarly, the person in charge of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations' social media work in New York City argues that whilst the mission

occasionally hosts events offering the opportunity to take nice pictures which could be used for promoting the Palestinian culture, such as exhibitions with Palestinian crafts or a tasting with Palestinian chocolate, from her point of view this type of message simply is not a priority, as reporting about (alleged) Israeli human rights violations is perceived by her to be much more relevant and urgent. Weighing in on the importance of the different types of message content, the external communication of the mission, therefore, focuses on the latter: "We would love to have chocolate every day, every even, but I think you have to weigh … At the end of the day the gravity of the situation and the reality is, your people are suffering so you can't post food pictures every day, because that … You have a goal and that's to not let these people suffer the way that they are. That's what the work really revolves around and then the few times that we are able to celebrate the culture, we obviously do it too and it's great to share but it can't be most of your work" (Pal UN: 123).

Focusing on the conflict and in this way internationally increasing the awareness for the negative implications of the conflict for the Palestinian population, which without the Palestinian external communication often remain invisible and ununderstood, is perceived by the Palestinian practitioners as the best way to challenge the status quo (PLO MA: 119; similar: Pal UK: 123). To maximize the impact of their conflict-focused external communication for challenging the status quo the Palestinian conflict parties securitize the conflict by highlighting the crisis and the singularity, severity and omnipresence[12] of the conflict, thus emphasizing that it is highly urgent and necessary that the international community intervenes. To achieve this securitizing effect the Palestinian conflict parties avoid using "normalizing" language (PLO MA: 119). Even in the posts in which something positive is described the positive issue is typically framed as an expression of "resilience": Palestine is able to achieve all of this "despite" the conditions of the occupation and the conflict, and not "because of" (PLO MA: 119).

Israel – Featuring topics of interests beyond the conflict and normalization of the conflict

As the Israeli side, in contrast to the Palestinian side, is comparatively satisfied with the status quo and is mostly interested in keeping the benefits the status quo provides Israel as topdog, the Israeli practitioners adapt their external communication in a way which best serves this purpose: External communication can be

12 The crisis is perceived and portrayed by the Palestinian side as continuous. In an interview with the Italian journalist Francesca Borri the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, e.g. argues: "it's not that there is a war at some point, and on the other days we have peace instead. We are always under occupation, it's a daily aggression. It's just of varying intensity" (Ynet 05.10.2018).

used to help foster economic and social/institutional relationships[13] and in this way to conserve (or even enhance) the benefits which result from these relationships: economic wealth and a high international status, in particular. Focusing too much on the conflict would overshadow or even undermine these efforts.[14] Consequently, the external communication on the Israeli side does not focus exclusively on the conflict but deals with these other priorities as well so as to keep its existing benefits:

Being portrayed and being perceived exclusively from the perspective of the conflict is perceived by the Israeli practitioners as very disadvantageous, as such a focus would overshadow Israel's achievements such as, for instance, its good economic performance and diplomatic relations. As most of the media reporting is already dominated by a conflict-dominated depiction of Israel, the Israeli practitioners are trying to introduce, with the Israeli external communication, these missing stories, which are, for the Israeli side, at least as much priorities such as stories about the conflict. A member of the Israeli GPO's social media team explains: "What the message is behind it is that many if not all of the foreign journalists are coming to Israel because of the conflict. We can't really blame them. This is the main maker or news, this is the main source of interest, this is what sell newspapers or commercials in the TV. We understand that. We don't criticize that. But on the same time, we wish to introduce to the journalists the other side of Israel. We don't tell them to ignore the conflict. Nobody expects them to do that. But we do want to say, if you're stationed here and you have a work visa in Israel and you are supported by us and by others and we try to assist in many ways for

13 External communication of the government can help to improve and safeguard one's economic relations and status like commercials do in marketing and campaigning.

14 While a clear majority of practitioners (including experts commentating in the Israeli press, regardless whether they are rather liberal or rather conservative) agrees that the external communication of the Israeli government and its branches should not focus on the conflict but on Israel's positive sides, there is less agreement on the question to which extent Israel should refer to the conflict at all. A majority argues that the conflict is still strongly associated with Israel and that this makes it necessary not to abstain completely from references to the conflict, as it would also not be credible to be silent about the topic completely. These references should, however, be used not more than absolutely necessary (This also offers an explanation for why, even though the detected share of shaming posts is low in the Israeli external communication, still some posts referring to the conflict and using shaming could be identified in the content analyses). Some voices, in contrast, recommend to refer to the conflict even less and a minority of voices worries that the Israeli external communication has become "too soft" in the meanwhile (cf. also the positions in the discussion in the workshop on the topic of "Winning the Battle of the Narrative" during the 2010 Herzliya Conference, in which representatives from Israeli governmental organizations as well as representatives from NGOs took part (Michlin 2010: 3f.; Landman 2010: 57f.)).

you to do your job, we also humbly suggest that you would cover civilian fields, like economy, culture" (Isr GPO1: 34).[15]

Highlighting economic, social and cultural achievements, in contrast, allows the Israeli side to shift the attention to issues linked to its economic & financial and social/institutional interests, which matter greatly to the Israeli side and that are, as shown in section 6.1.2., for the Israeli side at least equally important. Adding these missing stories about the Israeli economic, cultural and human achievements, consequently, is the core task of the external communication of the different branches of the Israeli government which engage in external communication. Consequently, for example, the Government Press Office defines "to find stories about Israel innovations, Israel in new art shows. Everything that portray Israel in the way that the foreign media doesn't recognize. You know, something else about Israel. Something the world doesn't know about Israel. That's my main mantra" (Isr GPO2: 96) as its core task and aims to show "Israel in full image" (Isr GPO1: 34) (these words are even used as the slogan for the GPO).[16] And even the IDF spokesperson's unit, which represents the military branch of Israel and that, therefore, is persistently confronted with the conflict, does not perceive it as the purpose of its external communication to focus exclusively on the conflict in its external communication but to add "a [missing] piece of the puzzle, which is important to understand Israel" (Isr IDF: 157). Especially when there are no major combat activities the unit perceives reporting about the conflict not even as a priority (Isr IDF: 40), instead showcasing its professionalism, innovations, technology and diversity and the achievements of Israel as a start-up nation (Isr IDF: 16ff.).

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15 Similarly, also a high-ranking member of the IDF spokesperson's unit describes the reporting of the international media as incomplete and therefore even "misleading". Consequently, he identifies the need to thematize topics beyond the conflict, such as the Israeli achievements, to add these for them important missing aspect: "But definitely our message to the world is not just about the conflict with Hamas or with the Palestinians. It's much more about what is Israel because people have a misleading view about what Israel is all about" (Isr IDF: 37)." "The problem with the international media here dealing mostly with the hardcore [(i.e., conflict-/war-related) content], is that they miss out on a piece of the puzzle, which is important to understand Israel" (Isr IDF: 157). Similarly, also the spokesperson's unit of COGAT, the Israeli Coordination of Government Activities in the (Palestinian) Territories, sees a lack of reports about the positive aspects of its work that it wants to fill with its external communication on the social media: "And I think, and it is not for propaganda, I really think as a spokesperson that it is very difficult to show the good things. And as you might know, in communication it is all the time the bad things and not the good things that are highlighted. But the good things – or if you can call them the good things – if you want to show the daily life, the real daily life that happens in Judea and Samaria, you can see that it is not making a lot of place in the communication – unfortunately" (Isr COGAT: 4).

16 The GPO logo can be viewed using the following link: http://gpoeng.gov.il/images/laam-en-l .png (accessed on 20.11.2017).

Focusing predominantly on the conflict, however, does not only take away the attention from Israeli achievements and, therefore, from important priorities of their external communication, it can actually undermine the promotion of such achievements and harm the Israeli image, as shifting the attention to the conflict unintendedly can also shift the attention to stigmata, events and practices that shed negative light on Israel and can be used to challenge the status quo (cf. also sections 7.1. and 7.3.).[17] Having the interest to defend its benefits and to conserve the status quo, consequently, it is strategically the best option for the Israeli side to side-line the conflict in its external communication and to normalize the conflict by downplaying its severity.

Indeed, such a mindset and practice of normalization & side-lining of the conflict as a strategic adaptation can be observed for the Israeli practitioners. In the following particularly illustrative example, for example, a staff member of the Israeli Government Press Office goes as far as to joke about the fact that reporting from Israel offers journalists the chance to report about a conflict, whilst enjoying a comfortable and safe life at the same time: "When there's conflict here, so that number of about 700 employees in foreign media, triples. Sometimes even more. So that's the reality on the ground. So of course, if conflict is here I would be … I have great respect for those that put themselves in danger but most of the time they're sitting on the beach. Or sitting in coffee shops, eating, meeting in the luxury of a western developed state in the Middle East. In the beginning of March there's hardly any rain and it's quite pleasant outside. […] It's not that bad. So, you understand, from their perspective, if they can cover the conflict in the luxury of a western standard … First of all, from their perspective, they are in the conflict. From the news organizations, they are one of the most difficult places to cover.

17 From the point of view of the experience of the Israeli practitioners, reports about the conflict tend to be linked to stigmata about Israel. A member of the Israeli Government Press Office, for example, argues: "with the materials we're spreading, we're not trying to shame the opponent. That's not the purpose. The purpose of putting stories about Israeli beyond the conflict [is that ~~because~~] there are a lot of stigmas against Israel. If you ask someone from, I don't know, Illinois, Chicago, but what do you think about Israel? They think, you know, desert, camels, war zone. But no, we're one of the most successful high-tech countries and it's not only war here. And we want people to know Israel is different. So, we, you know, once a year we have a very big gay parade in Tel Aviv. So, we send our correspondence over there and we did a big story and, also, we did it with the social media and sponsored stories because, you know, with the images, sometimes like, Israeli is like Iran. We are religious, and we kill the gays, you know, throw them out of the roof of buildings like Iraq, but no. We're a very open society. More open than the United States. And people don't know about it because the thing [~~is~~] they know about Israel is what they hear in the news. And what they hear in the news. I don't blame the journalists because that's interesting. War is interesting. War always has more ratings than peace. And this is why we have to make the effort to put stories that are not what they used to get about Israel" (Isr GPO2: 47f.).

And third of all, there's always a chance of the outbreak of violence that they'd have to cover as well. So, there's this luxury of covering a main story, which is talked about almost daily across the world. You're relevant for your news organization for your own name. And the story on the table is the issue of conflict. [~~And that has absolutely no …~~] When you look at the state of the world, there are places which are much more important to cover, too. Definitely [~~there's …~~] we're overreported in a way that undermines and judges Israel to a different standard than anywhere else in the world" (Isr GPO2: 167-173). The strong focus of the international media on the conflict tends to shift attention to stigmata, events and practices that shed negative light on Israel. Consequently, from the perspective of the practitioners, it is necessary to counter this by choosing a "beyond conflict strategy" (Isr GPO2: 75), trying to sideline and normalize the conflict. Instead, it is perceived as crucial to "show that we [i.e., Israel] are not Satan [… but] a very liberal state, a very progressive state" (Isr GPO2: 75).[18]

Israel's normalization & side-lining efforts go as far as to try to frame itself as a Mediterranean country – not a country in the Middle East with all its political tensions and violent conflicts.[19] Thinking about economic success as well, e.g. in 2012 Ido Aharoni, then Consul General of Israel to New York, argued that it needs to be the ambition of the State of Israel to be compared rather with the Mediterranean Spain or the high-tech country Korea than with countries from the war-torn Middle East: "For many, many years we thought that our job was to convince the world that we were right and our adversaries were wrong. That's an important thing to do. But there is a new thing today, in the age of the internet. It's called the Power of Attraction. If you're not attractive, it becomes very difficult for you to be competitive. Traditionally, we thought of Jerusalem as a city in competition with Cairo. Jerusalem's competition should not be Cairo. It should be Paris. Tel Aviv's competition should be Barcelona. Israel's competition should not be Syria or Lebanon or Jordan. Israel's competition should be Spain or Korea. And that's the new mindset that we need to introduce to the conversation" (Ido Aharoni in Knowledge@Wharton 01.03.2012). According to Aharoni, an image of Israel focusing exclusively on the conflict is harmful from the point of view of its interests. Instead, Israel should promote a more positive and comprehensive image: "Israel's international image

18 While the "beyond the conflict strategy" is perceived and experienced as the most efficient strategy of external communication for the Israeli side by the Israeli practitioners, they also acknowledge the limitations of their efforts. Their efforts can only be "a drop in the sea" and "only change [the] opinion of a few" (Isr GPO2: 75, 79), if Israeli policies arouse negative attention. Changing the "world's public view about Israel" is not exclusively a task of the practitioners working on Israel's external communication but also "the job of the politicians" (Isr GPO2: 83) (cf. also the recommendations in section 9.4.3.).

19 Similarly, often the framing that many Israelis feel "culturally European" is used (cf. e.g. Schneider 2014: 4).

does not serve its interests. This means that Israel should accentuate in deeds, and not just in words, that it is a place that is dynamic and full of energy, whose pulse relies on creativity and initiative" (Ido Aharoni in Globes 21.07.2010).

6.1.4 Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The characteristics described in the last section which are relevant for the conflict parties for adapting their external communication according to their interests as shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure are characteristics that are best provided by those strategies of external communication that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" respectively as "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). Shaming allows the Palestinian side, therefore, to focus on their single most important topic with ease. Using shaming enables the Palestinian conflict parties to feature (alleged) Israeli misdeeds and in this way question the status quo, encouraging interventions by appealing to the moral and normative responsibility of the international community and illustrating the severity and uniqueness of the conflict.

Branding, i.e., positive self-depiction, in contrast, allows the Israeli side to feature and promote its strengths and achievements and this way to foster its economic relations and its social/institutional status. As branding does not require any reference to the conflict and typically also does not use such references, it, furthermore, helps to sideline & normalize the conflict and thus shift the attention away from stigmata, events and practices that would shed negative light on Israel and could be used to challenge the status quo.

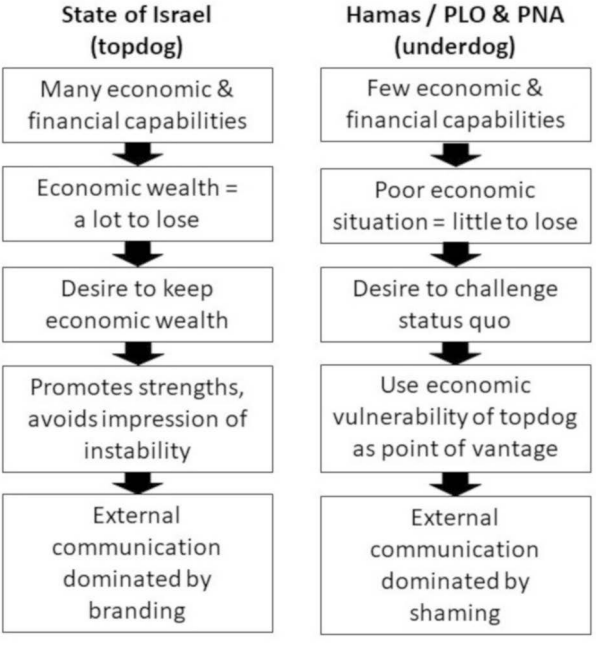
As shaming is consequently the ideal strategy for the Palestinian conflict parties and branding is the ideal strategy for the Israeli side from the point of view of their interests, it can be expected that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming and the Israeli external communication by branding. Indeed, as shown previously in chapter 5, this is the case for the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of Hamas, as well as the external communication of the PLO & the PNA, are strongly dominated by shaming, while the external communication of the Israeli authorities is strongly dominated by branding.

6.2 Detailed example: Interests resulting from the distribution of economic & financial capabilities

Having demonstrated in section 6.1. how the distribution of capabilities in general shapes the interests of the conflict parties and in this way also the selection of ex-

ternal communication strategies, to provide additional evidence, as well as a more profound understanding of the prioritization pathway and its implications the following section shows that the elements of the prioritization pathway can also be observed when specifically examining the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities on the interests and selection of external communication strategies by the conflict parties (cf. visual overview in figure 17):

Figure 17: Overview – The prioritization pathway – Interests resulting from the distribution of economic & financial capabilities



The Israeli side has a lot of economic & financial capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.2.). Consequently, it profits from the benefit of economic wealth (section 6.2.1.). This benefit is greatly appreciated, and, for this reason, Israel has a strong interest in defending it to avoid running the risk of losing it (section 6.2.2.). The perception of instability, however, has the potential to harm Israel's economic relations. Promoting its strengths, in contrast, can help Israel foster its economic relations. Thus, the Israeli side avoids references that might undermine its efforts by conveying the impression of instability, such as frequent references to the conflict in its external communication, and instead makes promoting its economic strengths a priority for its external communication (section 6.2.3.). As branding is

the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to showcase and promote, safeguard and foster Israel's not conflict-related strengths (section 6.2.4.), the Israeli side chooses a branding-dominated strategy of external communication (as already shown in chapter 5).

The Palestinian side, in contrast, only has few economic & financial capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.2.). Consequently, it suffers from a comparatively poor economic situation (section 6.2.1.). This contributes to a strong dissatisfaction on the Palestinian side with the status quo of the conflict. Challenging the status quo (section 6.2.2.) is, therefore, the single number one priority for their external communication. Not having a lot to lose, the Palestinian conflict parties also do not need to care about conveying the impression of instability, which means they can refer to the conflict frequently. Quite the opposite, they use the economic vulnerability of the topdog in order to harm them (section 6.2.3.). As shaming is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to challenge the status quo, to focus on the conflict and attacking the opponent, the Palestinian side chooses a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.2.4.).

6.2.1 Benefits & disadvantages

Having many economic & financial capabilities, the Israeli side profits from economic wealth. Having only few economic & financial capabilities, in contrast, the Palestinian side suffers from comparatively poor economic conditions:

Benefits for the Israeli side

Earlier in section 4.1.2.2. it was shown that the Israeli side has a lot of economic & financial capabilities, much more so than the Palestinian side, and, therefore, has a stronger economy and more comprehensive trade and investment relationships. This enables the State of Israel to profit from considerable wealth. This economic strength is not only a source to fund military capabilities but also a source of prestige and comfort. The status of living in Israel is high (UNDP 2016) and the unemployment rates in Israel are very low (OECD 2018b).

Disadvantages for the Palestinian side

The Palestinian side, in contrast, only has comparatively few economic & financial capabilities. Its economy is much weaker and more fragile than the Israeli economy. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods, as well as the destruction of infrastructure in the course of the conflict, have hampered economic development in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in particular, the establishment of

international trade relations has also been hindered.[20] The unemployment rates in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, are high[21] and the standard of living is much lower than on the Israeli side (UNDP 2016). The situation in the Gaza Strip has often even been described as a "humanitarian crisis" (e.g. UN News 15.02.2019).

6.2.2 (Dis)satisfaction with the status quo and vulnerabilities

The Israeli side is comparatively satisfied with the status quo and has the desire to keep its wealth. This means, however, also that it has something to lose and that it is vulnerable to a potential impression of instability. The Palestinian side, in contrast, has the strong desire to overcome the status quo and, having little to lose, does not need to take care of a potential impression of instability:

Satisfaction of the Israeli side with the status quo and vulnerability to the impression of instability

The economic wealth is a benefit neither the political leadership nor the population of the State of Israel want to lose. Having achieved a high socio-economic standard, there is also a strong domestic pressure to maintain or even to expand the privilege of economic wealth and a high standard of living. Indeed, welfare-related debates during the last years proved to be one of the most vehement and efficient sources of domestic opposition in Israel, going so far as to ensure that securing economic wealth for the population is a topic the Israeli government cannot ignore. Most notably, in 2011, about 430,000 people protested for more social justice (a notable number of people considering that the total population of the country was estimated to be about 7.8 million people in 2011 (World Bank 2018e)). According to polls, the movement had the support of 90% of the population (Guardian 04.09.2011). While the socio-economic conditions in the West Bank, and especially in the Gaza Strip, are by far worse than in Israel, the higher already existing level of prosperity on the Israeli side also leads to higher domestic expectations and means that the Israeli side has more to lose economically than the Palestinian side. Additionally, being the topdog, it is also much more difficult for the Israeli side to excuse economic problems by referring to obstacles resulting from the conflict than for the Palestinian side.

Having something to lose and the desire not to deteriorate their own socio-economic situation, however, also makes Israel vulnerable. Especially, (perceived) instability can be very harmful to the Israeli economy. Scholars have, for example,

20 CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank; CIA World Factbook (03.12.2018): Country Report Gaza Strip; World Bank 2013.

21 CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank.

shown the harmful effects of the (perceived) instability, the perception of violence and the conflict for the investment in Israel (Anthony et al. 2015: 20; Fielding 2000: 23f.) and the Israeli trade relations (Didier 2017) (this complies well with the theoretical expectations from scholars such as Cliff 2012; Amodio & Di Maio 2018; Eckstein & Tsiddon 2004; Tabassam et al. 2016: 327; Alesina et al. 1996 and Veiga & Aisen 2011 that were quoted also in chapter 3). Especially, the Israeli tourism sector is sensitive to perceived instability, as a high level of perceived instability and insecurity tends to frighten away tourists. Reports about terror attacks or the fighting during particularly intense stages, such as the war in Gaza in summer 2014, in the news, have led to cancelations and decreased visitor numbers in Israel because tourists felt too unsafe (Financial Times 26.11.2014; Times of Israel 29.09.2014, Haaretz 11.05.2018; Simonovic 2012).

Dissatisfaction of the Palestinian side with the status and low vulnerability

On the Palestinian side, in contrast, the economic disadvantages (described in section 6.2.1.) contribute to a high level of dissatisfaction and to fueling a strong desire to overcome the status quo within both the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian population (Bocco et al. 2002: esp. pp. 3, 1 & 2).[22] The economic problems are, however, not perceived as an independent problem but as a consequence of the conflict, the Israeli occupation and the blockade policies.[23] A termination of the Israeli occupation and blockade policies is perceived as necessary for overcoming central economic problems (cf. e.g. UNCTAD 12.09.2017; General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific 22.05.2019). Consequently, for the Palestinian side, the conflict and challenging the status remain the single most important priority and the economic situation is perceived as another implication of the conflict rather than an issue of its own, which, however, does provide a strong additional motivation.

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22 Opinion polls show a high level of dissatisfaction with the current domestic conditions within the Palestinian population, too, and that the population especially blames Israel for this (PSR 2019: 5f.). A 2018 survey of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) shows that among the different problems the economic situation is perceived as one of the most pressuring topics by the Palestinian population. According to the survey, 26% of the Palestinians think that "poverty and unemployment" is the most serious problem confronting the Palestinian society. Only one other topic, the "continuation of occupation and settlement activities", was mentioned more often (28%), showing that the bad conditions are perceived to be linked closely to the conflict environment (PSR 2018: 10). Polls from previous years show the same tendency (PSR 2017: 5f.).

23 According to a 2019 survey of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) Israel is blamed by a majority within the Palestinian population for the bad domestic conditions in the Palestinian territories (PSR 2019: 5f.).

Already suffering economically from the implications of the conflict at the same time, however, means that the Palestinian conflict parties, in contrast to the Israeli side, have comparatively little to lose. Therefore, they also need to worry less about the negative consequences of a perception of instability. This makes the Palestinian side less vulnerable than the Israeli side.

6.2.3 Adapting the external communication to economic & financial interests

Having the strong interest to keep its economic wealth and being vulnerable to the impression of instability, the Israeli side avoids references to the conflict, instead promoting its economic strengths. Having a strong desire to overcome the status quo, the Palestinian side, in contrast, uses the Israeli vulnerability as a point of vantage:

Israel – Featuring the own (economic) attractiveness, avoiding the impression of instability

As losing economic privileges is one of the biggest potential sources of domestic criticism, it is can be expected, from a strategic point of view, that the Israeli government sees its external communication efforts as a tool to also safeguard and foster its economic interests and that the government aims to avoid using a strategy of external communication that might have the potential to harm these interests.

Indeed, Israeli practitioners perceive it as problematic for the Israeli business interests, when Israel is only associated with conflict and war, as the following assessment from the Brand Israel project, a marketing research project that has strongly influenced the Israeli public diplomacy, for example, shows: "Americans don't see Israel as being like the US […] [they] know a lot about Israel, just not the right things. They think of Israel as a grim, war-torn country, not one booming with high-tech and busy outdoor cafes. That doesn't mean that Americans are anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian. They just find Israel to be totally irrelevant to their lives, and they are tuning out" (ISRAEL21c 20.01.2005; Griffin 2013: 26). Focusing predominantly on conflict and war shifts the attention to negative connotations such as instability, insecurity and violence and away from stories of economic success such as, for instance, the aforementioned example of the Israeli high-tech industry.

Consequently, using too many references to the conflict is perceived by the Israeli practitioners as counterproductive. Ido Aharoni, the then Consul for Media and Public Affairs at the Consulate General of Israel in New York, e.g. warned in 2001 to contribute to an impression of Israel as a war-torn country by spreading images of the conflict in Israel and Palestine (as it is often the case when using shaming): "Too many people associate Israel in the context of the broader Arab Israel conflict. Pro-Israel advocates (including the government of Israel) are partially

responsible for this association, because for far too long, that is the impression we have projected to the outside world. This is not to say that the threats facing Israel should be understated: from Palestinian and Hezbollah terrorism, a nuclear Iran and the increasing attacks on Israel's legitimacy [...] However, we must broaden the narrative to highlight Israel's attractive dimensions, such as its latest high-tech innovations, medical breakthroughs and the dynamic art and cultural scenes in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem" (Aharoni in Times of Israel 03.06.2012 and Griffin 2013: 27).[24]

Particularly strong are the harmful implications of negative connotations such as instability and insecurity for the tourism sector. Indeed, these considerations are also present among the Israeli practitioners. In 2013, for example, Oren Drori, the then head of the media team of the Ministry of Tourism, criticized the abundant use of the term "Israel under fire" during the clashes in 2012 arguing "that the term had caused serious and potentially long lasting damage to Israeli Tourism, effects that may continue to be felt for many months to come" (Tourism Review News 20.05.2013).

In contrast, it is perceived as crucial by the Israeli practitioners to feature Israel's (economic) attractiveness in its external communication, as this offers a big chance to safeguard, foster and even enhance Israel's economic status. Nation-branding campaigns promoting a positive national image have the potential „to increase foreign direct investments, boost tourism and elevate a nation's diplomatic standing" (Jerusalem Post 06.12.2015). Following the same logic, whilst acknowledging that is hard to ignore the conflict completely and a certain extent of crisis management is needed, Israeli communication experts on the 2010 Herzyla Conference, for example, argued that focusing on the conflict[25] and exercising only crisis management would lead to Israel missing valuable economic opportunities: "In that communication strategy, ignoring the conflict is not an option, but today, Israel deals exclusively with crisis management and that alone is no solution. It certainly has to have a rapid response team to manage the conflict, but it also

24 Practitioners on the Palestinian side have observed that the Israeli side rather tends to avoid referring too much to the conflict for economic and social/institutional reasons, too: "I think it's about developing better relations around the world for economic reasons, and political reasons. And three, I think they want to distract... They focus on Iran, right? They focus on other things. They don't focus on us" (PLO MA: 129).

25 In 2008, Ido Aharoni, then Head of the Brand Management Team of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that it is not even necessary to make the target audience abroad completely forget about the conflict to be successful with branding: "You can disagree with our policies yet go to watch an Israeli film or invest in an Israeli company traded on NASDAQ". Branding for him does not work by changing the political news, but by diversifying the overall message. "It is a decision to communicate this [broader] reality--one that we believe is attractive, vibrant and relevant--in order to give a wider perspective of what Israel is" (Moment Magazine 2008).

needs to find niche markets and use the internet to push its products – whether it is a place, a concept or a person. By doing so, it will create a holistic personality for itself. By making it more viable, this will not only improve Israel's image but also its economy" (Landman 2010: 58).

Palestine – Using the Israeli vulnerability as a point of vantage to challenge the status quo

Having much less to lose than the Israeli side economically, the Palestinian side, in contrast, does not need to be as careful with referring to the conflict as the Israeli side. As the conflict and challenging the status quo is their single most important priority, the Palestinian conflict parties, consequently, do not shy away from referring to the conflict and its negative implications for the Palestinian side a lot. Quite the opposite, the Israeli vulnerability and the impression of instability, which is so harmful to its economic interests, can be (and is!) used by the Palestinian conflict parties as a point of vantage for harming and pressurizing their opponent. Hamas, for example, does not only focus on the conflict in their external communication, they even complement their shaming-dominated strategy by regular calls to support the BDS movement and its actions, calling to the public to boycott, divest and sanction the State of Israel.[26] [27]

6.2.4 Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The last section has described the characteristics that are most relevant for the conflict parties to adapt their external communication to best suit their interests, which are shaped by the asymmetric distribution of economic & financial capabilities. These characteristics are characteristics that are best provided by those external communication strategies that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" and "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are particularly attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). If this option is available, shaming, therefore, typically refers to a conflict as a reference theme. When focusing on the conflict, however, Israel might run the risk of shifting the attention to negative connotations, such as instability, insecurity and violence, meaning also that the focus would be drawn away from stories of economic success. This could, ultimately, have the potential to harm the country's economic relations. Consequently, it can be expected that Israel does not

26 Cf. e.g. on the English-speaking Twitter Channel of the Palestinian Information Center: https://twitter.com/palinfoen/status/1087441104323125248 (accessed: 30.06.2019).

27 The PLO & the PNA, in contrast to Hamas, typically do not refer to BDS, as a formal support for BDS could be interpreted as a breach of the agreements in the Oslo Accords (Pal UK: 144, 146).

use shaming abundantly. Branding, in contrast, allows Israel to promote its economic strength. Consequently, Israel can be expected to use branding amply.

The Palestinian side, in contrast, having less to lose, is not vulnerable to an impression of instability and, therefore, does not need to shy away from using shaming for featuring the conflict as their single most important priority and as the strategy most suitable to challenging the dissatisfying status quo. Furthermore, shaming can be well used to provide justifications for calling for boycotting, divesting from and sanctioning Israel.

As shaming is, consequently, the ideal strategy for the Palestinian conflict parties and branding is the ideal strategy for the Israeli side from the point of view of their interests, it can be expected that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming and the Israeli external communication by branding. Indeed, as is already shown in chapter 5, this is the case for the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of Hamas, as well as the PLO & the PNA, is strongly dominated by shaming and regularly references to BDS can be found on several of their channels. The external communication of the Israeli authorities, in contrast, is strongly dominated by branding and the Israeli channels frequently promote the country's economic attractiveness.

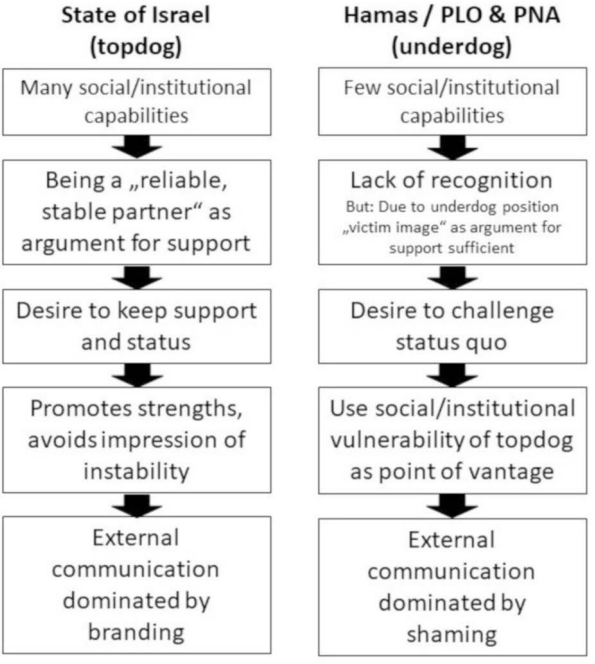
6.3 Detailed example: Interests resulting from the distribution of social/institutional capabilities

Section 6.1. has demonstrated how the distribution of capabilities generally shapes the interests of the conflict parties and in this way also the selection of external communication strategies and section 6.2. has illustrated the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities in further detail. In order to provide additional evidence and a more profound understanding of the prioritization pathway and its implications the following section now shall show that the elements of the prioritization pathway can also be observed when specifically examining the impact of the distribution of social/institutional capabilities (cf. visual overview in figure 18):

The Israeli side has a lot of social/institutional capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.3.). Consequently, it profits from the impression of being a reliable, stable partner, this image offers a valuable justification for supporting Israel (section 6.3.1.). Indeed, Israel profits from large aid payments and does not want to lose this support. They have a strong interest in keeping these payments and the social/institutional status which makes it possible to justify them (section 6.3.2.). The impression of being a reliable, stable partner, however, can be undermined by the impression of instability or the raise of doubts about their integrity. Thus, the Israeli side avoids refer-

ences that might undermine its efforts by conveying the impression of instability or shifting the attention to incidents that could be interpreted as non-compliance with international norms, such as frequent references to the conflict in its external communication, and instead makes promoting its social/institutional relations a priority for its external communication (section 6.3.3.). As branding is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to showcase and, in this way promote, safeguard and foster Israel's not conflict-related strengths, the Israeli side chooses a branding-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.3.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

Figure 18: Overview – The prioritization pathway – Interests resulting from the distribution of social/institutional capabilities



The Palestinian side, in contrast, has few social/institutional capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.3.). Consequently, they suffer from a lack of international recognition (section 6.3.1.). This contributes to the strong dissatisfaction of the Palestinian side with the status quo of the conflict. Challenging the status quo (section 6.3.2.) is, therefore, the single number one priority for their external communication. As, being the underdog, the Palestinian side does not rely on the impression of being a

stable, reliable partner as justification for support, the Palestinian conflict parties do not need to care about conveying the impression of instability, when referring frequently to the conflict. Quite the opposite, they try to use the vulnerability of the social/institutional status of the Israeli side in order to harm their opponent (section 6.3.3.). As shaming is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to challenge the status quo and to focus on the conflict, the Palestinian side chooses a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.3.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

6.3.1 Benefits & disadvantages and (dis)satisfaction with the status quo

Looking specifically at the social/institutional dimension of the conflict, it was shown in section 4.1.2.3. that the Israeli side has a lot of social/institutional capabilities, much more so than the Palestinian side. This gives the State of Israel a high social status in the international community. Unlike the Palestinian actors, the State of Israel is fully acknowledged as a state by the most influential nations and is a full member of the international community. This high status entails certain obligations and expectations, as well as some attractive benefits, such as the principle of sovereignty of each full member of the international community, valuable strategic, diplomatic and political international relations and cooperation and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs.[28] Possibly one of the most important benefits for the State of Israel resulting from its high social/institutional status, however, might be that from the high status comparatively strong justifications for supporting Israel despite (or even because of) its topdog role can be drawn:

Both the Israeli side and the Palestinian side profit significantly from foreign aid:

According to data of the World Bank, in 2016, the West Bank and Gaza received 2.402 billion US dollars of official development assistance and official aid in total,[29] a significant amount of the total GDP of the West Bank and Gaza (in 2016: 13.426 billion US dollars[30]). In 2009, the Palestinian Authorities even profited from 2.828

28 Cf. Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations 1945).

29 Net official development assistance and official aid, according to the World Bank national accounts data, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018c).

30 According to the World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018a).

billion US dollars.[31] In per-capita terms that means that the Palestinian Authorities received 527.68 US dollars per capita of official development assistance. [32]

However, Israel receives a high amount of foreign aid, too: For example, they receive more than three billion US dollars of direct foreign assistance from the US government each year (USAID Greenbook 2016: 19). This is more than the total sum of official development assistance and official aid the West Bank and Gaza receive and equals about a fifth of the total US foreign-aid budget. In relation to the size of the Israeli population, this means the United States subsidize Israel with approximately 500 US dollars per capita, even though Israel is a relatively wealthy industrial country with a per capita income similar to that of South Korea or Spain (Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 31). From 1946 until 2016 the USA paid in total more than 125 billion US dollars of direct foreign aid to Israel (USAID Greenbook 2016: 19). Additionally, Israel received several billion US dollars of funds for its missile defense systems (Aljazeera 08.03.2018). Moreover, Israel has also received support from other countries. Germany, for example, subsidized Israel's purchase of three modern submarines (Spiegel Online 23.10.2017). Besides financial support, the State of Israel has profited from massive diplomatic support from Western governments, especially from the United States; the USA has frequently used its veto right in the UN Security Council in favor of Israel (Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 31f.).

Such large amounts of foreign aid and diplomatic support, however, need to be justified toward the domestic population of the donor countries.[33] Justifying aid to the Palestinian side is comparatively easy. As the Palestinian side is the underdog and it is comparatively poor, the aid can be framed as humanitarian support or development aid and, in order to create empathy, the Palestinians can be framed as victims (cf. also section 7.1.). This type of argumentation, however, does not work for the powerful and rich State of Israel. Instead, however, Israel's many social/institutional capabilities make it possible for its allies to use another type of argumentation to justify their aid to the State of Israel: As Israel has stable state structures and is a recognized member of the international community, it is possible to frame Israel as an important and reliable (strategic) partner for stability

31 Net official development assistance and official aid, according to the World Bank national accounts data, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018c).

32 Net official development assistance and official aid, according to the World Bank national accounts data, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018d).

33 Indeed, supporting a comparatively rich country like Israel has not been uncontested in the United States. Within the IR (International Relations) scholarship a prominent criticism was formulated e.g. by Mearsheimer & Walt (2006). And within press reports the question of the necessity of the support was raised as well (e.g. Atlantic 15.09.2016). According to polls especially among parts of the Democrat electorate the support is far from uncontested (Atlantic 15.09.2016).

in the region (cf. also Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 32ff).[34] Additionally, referencing shared values, i.e., the values of the international community and the West, is often used to further strengthen the justification as to why Israel should be supported.[35] This makes being perceived as reliable and stable crucial to the State of Israel for justifying support to it.

6.3.2 (Dis)satisfaction with the status quo and vulnerabilities

Profiting from such high amounts of aid, the Israeli side has a strong interest in both keeping these support payments and maintaining its social/institutional status from which particularly strong justifications for such a support can be derived. The high social/institutional status of the State of Israel and the advantageous argumentations deriving from it are also vulnerable, however. On the one hand, the reference to shared values can be undermined by raising doubts about the compliance of the Israeli side with international norms (for the theoretical argument cf. also Daase 1999: 236ff.).[36] On the other hand, the framing of being a stable partner and, therefore, a strategic asset can be undermined by the impression of instability and inability of Israel to exert its monopoly on violence as one of the core features of statehood (for the theoretical argument cf. also Daase 1999: 228ff.).[37] The Pales-

34 The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), one of the most influential Pro-Israeli advocacy groups in the United States, for example, argued on their website that "The United States and Israel have formed a unique partnership to meet the growing strategic threats in the Middle East. […] This cooperative effort provides significant benefits for both the United States and Israel" (quoted by Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 32). Nowadays – updated to the current security challenges – the lobby group presents Israel as an asset for the USA in the fight against terrorism (AIPAC 2019a). A very similar wording was also used in the press release of the US State Department on the Ten-Year Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel, which calls Israel "a valuable and capable ally" (US Department of State 01.10.2018). Zunes (1996) notes that in general a majority of the US foreign policy elites has tended to emphasize the "stabilizing role" of Israel.

35 On its website the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), for example, describes Israel as „a unique sanctuary of democracy, freedom and pluralism in the Middle East, protecting its citizens' rights while upholding the core values it shares with America" (AIPAC 2019b). A similar language can be found also in the EU-Israeli relations. For example, the EU states as its motivation for the 2005 EU-Israel Action Plan that the initiative is „based on shared common values of democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and basic freedoms" (European Commission 2019).

36 Indeed, raising doubts about the „shared values" by referring to (alleged or actual) human rights violations can be observed to be a core element of the argumentation of many criticisms of support to Israel. The former Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Sha'ath for example wrote in a contribution for Haaretz about „the EU's Fantasy of Shared Values" and referred to continuous human rights violation of the Israeli side (Haaretz 31.05.2018).

37 Indeed, some prominent criticism of aid to Israel justifies its position with raising doubts about whether Israel actually has the ability to be a strategic asset as an ally (e.g. prominently

tinian side, in contrast, is not vulnerable, as it does not rely on the argument of being a stable, reliable partner as justification for support, as, having much fewer capabilities and for being the underdog because of this, it can rely easily on other justifications, as explained above.

6.3.3 Avoiding sore points, taking care of privileges, using points of vantage

For the Israeli side being perceived as a reliable and stable partner and an actor with shared values is the biggest leverage for justifying others' support. Consequently, it can be expected that the Israeli side avoids references that might have the potential to undermine this impression in its external communication. Quite the opposite, it can be expected that the practitioners on the Israeli side choose content for their external communication that helps to secure the impression of being a stable, reliable partner that shares the values of the target audience.

The Israeli practitioners are, therefore, careful not to use references to the conflict too often, as the abundant use of corresponding references can quickly become a lose-lose option. David Patrikarakos, the author of the book "War in 140 Characters: How Social Media is Reshaping Conflict in the 21st Century", e.g. concludes from an interview with IDF spokesperson Peter Lerner: "Israel was and is damned: If it strikes Hamas targets embedded in civilian areas or among protesters marching toward its borders, it receives international condemnation, but if Hamas succeeds in kidnapping or killing any of its soldiers or civilians, Hamas wins again, by showing that Israel has 'lost' to a much weaker force – all played out on social media and in real time. It is a lose-lose situation" (aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018). If Israel presents itself as offensive, Israel is quickly perceived as an actor not complying with the norms and values of the international community. If, however, Israel presents itself as being harmed, this raises doubts about its ability to be a stable and strong partner. From the Israeli strategic perspective, therefore, permanent and abundant references to the conflict are harmful.

Quite the opposite, Israeli practitioners and communication experts perceive it to be necessary to use external communication to actively strengthen the perception of Israel as a reliable partner with shared values. Dan Illouz, member of the Jerusalem City Council with the Hitorerut movement party advocates for efforts to be associated with widely appreciated positive values instead of with the

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Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 32ff.). Mearsheimer & Walt (2006: 32) even raise the question of whether Israel might be rather a strategic burden. An impression of a lack of control and instability despite massive support would play into the hands of this criticism and further increase corresponding doubts.

conflict, for example: "Unless we work to change Israel's branding[38] from 'occupation', 'apartheid' and 'war crimes', to relevant values such as 'hope', 'freedom' and 'justice', we will never be able to win the public diplomacy battle" (Times of Israel 23.07.2013). Similarly, researchers from Molad, an Israeli, politically center-left oriented think-tank see this strategic consideration reflected in the planning of the external communication of the Israeli government. Writing about the creation of the National Hasbara[39] Headquarters by the Israeli government they argue e.g.: "Its creation reflects a broad recognition of the importance of fortifying a positive image for Israel, maintaining its desirability, and promoting hasbara messaging that emphasizes cooperation and shared values" (Molad 2012: 26). Moreover, to emphasize common values Israel has also presented itself often as "only democracy in the Middle East" (e.g. Jerusalem Post 22.04.2017 about the strategy of external communication of the Israeli MFA; Jerusalem Post 06.12.2015; aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018). Similarly, referring to both shared values and the aspect of reliability and stability, the Pro-Israeli think tank "The Israel Project" in its "The Israel Project's 2009 GLOBAL LANGUAGE DICTIONARY" research, which was also said to have influenced many media and communication practitioners in the Israeli government (Independent 27.07.2014), recommends emphasizing that "Israel is America's one and only true ally in the region" and to argue that, therefore, "In these particularly unstable and dangerous times, Israel should not be forced to go it alone" (The Israel Project 2009: 67).

Unlike the Israeli side, the Palestinian side, being the weaker underdog, does not require to be perceived as stable or even like-minded to justify being supported, as it can present itself more easily credible as a suffering victim, due to their underdog position, and in this way easily generate empathy (cf. also section 7.1.). Quite the opposite, like the economic vulnerability, also this social/institutional vulnerability of the Israeli side can be used as a point of vantage by the Palestinian side. Especially shaming offers the Palestinian side the opportunity to pillory Israeli actions that are, or can be, perceived as breaches of the norms and values of the international community, such as human rights and the humanitarian law, and in this way raise doubts about Israel's self-characterization as an actor with shared values (cf. e.g. PLO MA: 99-101).

38 In this context the term "branding", as it is used by Illouz, has a different meaning than the conceptualization of the term used in this study. In the context of the quote, branding describes a set of characteristics associated with Israel as a brand.

39 "Hasbara" can be translated roughly with the English term "explain". It is the Hebrew term for "external communication". Today the Israeli practitioners rather tend to prefer the term "public diplomacy" instead, as they consider the early Hasbara efforts as too defensive (Isr MFA2: 57, 48; cf. also Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2006: 735).

6.3.4 Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The last section has described the characteristics that are most relevant for the conflict parties to adapt their external communication to best suit their interests, which are shaped by the asymmetric distribution of social/institutional capabilities. These characteristics are characteristics that are best provided by those external communication strategies that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" and "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are particularly attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). If this option is available, shaming, therefore, typically refers to a conflict as a reference theme. As argued in the last section, however, permanent and abundant references to the conflict, as it is typical for shaming, are harmful, as they risk undermining that Israel is perceived as a reliable, stable partner with shared values. Branding, in contrast, helps Israel foster this impression.

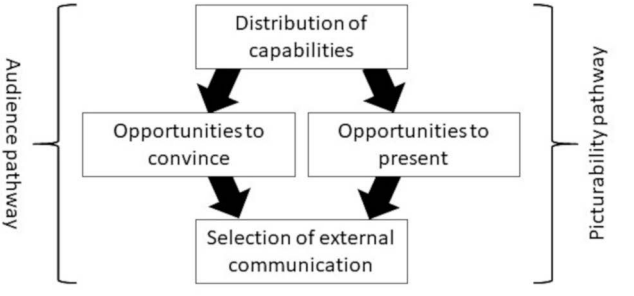
The Palestinian side, in contrast, being not vulnerable and even profiting from being perceived as the weak victim, does not need to shy away from using shaming for featuring the conflict as their single most important priority. The shaming strategy is most suitable to challenge the, from the Palestinian perspective, dissatisfying status quo. Furthermore, shaming can be well used to present accusations against Israel, that (allegedly) show that Israel violates international norms and that, consequently, raise doubts about Israel's self-characterization as an actor with shared values.

As shaming is consequently the ideal strategy for the Palestinian conflict parties and branding is the ideal strategy for the Israeli side from the point of view of their social/institutional interests, it can be expected that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming and the Israeli external communication by branding. Indeed, as it was shown already in chapter 5, this is the case for the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of Hamas, as well as the external communication of the PLO & the PNA, is strongly dominated by shaming and frequently features (alleged) Israeli norm violations. The external communication of the Israeli authorities, in contrast, is strongly dominated by branding and Israel frequently presents itself as a strong, reliable, stable partner with shared values.

7. Empirics II – Opportunities

The asymmetric distribution of capabilities amongst the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine (cf. section 4.1.2.) does not only shape divergent interests for the different conflict parties but also divergent *opportunities*. The unequal distribution shapes divergent opportunities to convince with shaming and/or branding (audience pathway) as well as divergent opportunities to present for the use of shaming and/or branding (picturability pathway). The divergent opportunities, in turn, influence which strategies of external communication the conflict parties can use most successfully: The asymmetric conflict structure offers the Palestinian side as underdogs better opportunities to convince and present for the use of shaming and the Israeli side as topdog better opportunities to convince and present for the use of branding.

Figure 19: The elements of the audience pathway (Distribution of capabilities opportunities to convince selection of external communication) and the picturability pathway (Distribution of capabilities opportunities to present selection of external communication)



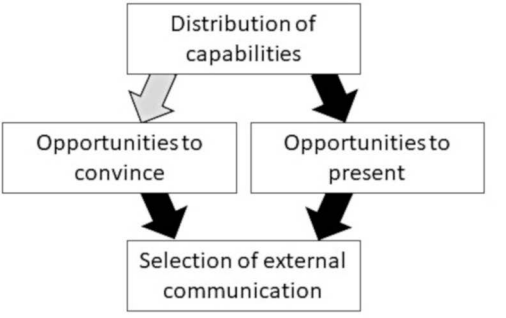
Step by step the following sections analyze the different elements of the resulting pathways, explaining how the selection of external communication strategies is shaped by the distribution of capabilities: First, section 7.1. shows how the asym-

metric distribution of capabilities shapes the divergent opportunities to convince that the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine have. Sections 7.2. through to 7.5., then, show how the asymmetric distribution of military, economic & financial and social/institutional capabilities shape divergent opportunities to present. Finally, section 7.6. explores how the resulting opportunities shape the selection of external communication strategies.

7.1 Opportunities to convince

Section 7.1. shows how the asymmetric distribution of capabilities shapes the divergent opportunities to convince that the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine have:

Figure 20: Overview – Step of the audience pathway explored in section 7.1. (highlighted in light grey)



Section 4.1.2. has shown that the distribution of capabilities amongst the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine is transversally and significantly unequal. As predicted theoretically, this very unequal distribution has a strong impact on the *opportunities to convince* of the conflict parties: The asymmetric distribution triggers an underdog/topdog effect shaping the divergent opportunities to convince that the different conflict parties have: The Palestinian conflict parties, as underdogs, profit from the underdog/topdog effect, as the effect makes it easier for them to gain empathy when referring to the conflict, in contrast to the Israeli side, as the topdog. It also makes it more difficult for the Israeli side, as the topdog, to present themselves as a victim, when the acts of violence on both sides are compared. Referring to the conflict, therefore, is less attractive for the Israeli side. The conflict, however, offers the most promising reference themes for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). As using this source of shaming themes convincingly

is due to the underdog/topdog effect much more difficult for the Israeli side, consequently, also shaming is much less promising for them as a strategy of external communication than for the Palestinian side.

Section 7.1.1. presents evidence from experimental research, which shows the presence of this cognitive effect in the conflict in Israel and Palestine. Section 7.1.2. then shows that the presence of this effect can not only be shown experimentally but that it is also reflected in observations of the Israeli and Palestinian practitioners from the practical experience from their everyday work.

7.1.1 The underdog/topdog effect in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

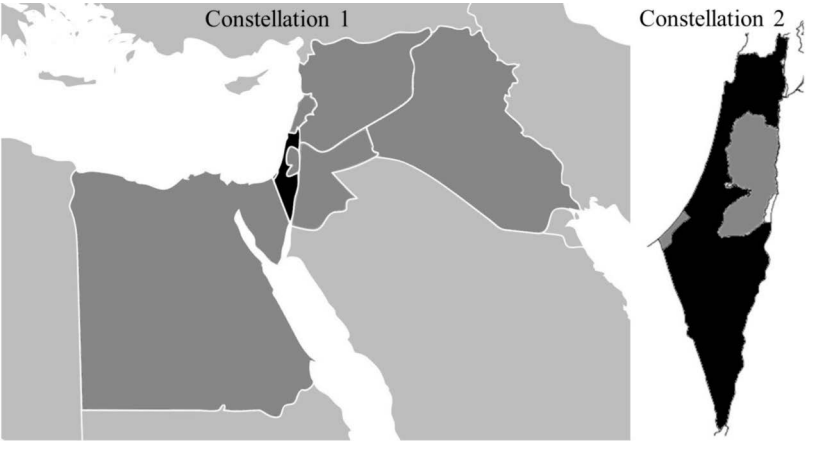
In the theory chapter (cf. section 3.4.1.3.) the hypothesis of social psychological researchers regarding the existence of an "underdog/topdog effect", i.e., the phenomenon that neutral observers tend to support the underdog (i.e., an actor which is disadvantaged in comparison to its opponent) in a competitive constellation in which an underdog is confronted with a superior opponent, was introduced (cf. especially Vandello et al. 2007; Jeffries et al. 2012). It was also demonstrated that this group of scholars could confirm their hypothesis in multiple experiments simulating various different competitive constellations. Similar to the other experimental settings the conflict in Israel and Palestine is a competitive constellation, which, as section 4.1.2. has shown, is characterized by a very strong disparity of the conflict parties. This inequality cannot be hidden from the foreign audiences targeted by the conflict parties with their external communication.[1] Consequently, it can be expected that the underdog/topdog effect also applies to the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

The most convincing evidence to demonstrate the existence of the underdog/topdog effect for the perception of the conflict in Israel and Palestine abroad, however, would be an experiment simulating the setting of the conflict itself. Indeed, conveniently, among the different experiments Vandello et al. conducted for their studies on the underdog/topdog effect there was one experiment related

1 The differences concerning the distribution of capabilities are highly significant and almost impossible to hide from the international public. Indeed, also the conflict parties do not contest this perception of the status quo. The Pro-Israeli scholar David Braha for example even argues in the conservative Israeli newspaper Jerusalem Post that "Any attempt to portray Israel as a victim – of rocket fire, of terror tunnels, of terrorist attacks, etc. – will crumble in the face of disparities that are so large. Only a few people will look beyond these seemingly eloquent figures, trying to understand the nuances of a conflict that is far more complex than it appears" (Jerusalem Post 01.01.2015). Similarly, David M. Weinberg, vice president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies, considers it for Israel's external communication to be "most important of all" not to "be embarrassed by Israel's strength. Admit to it" (Jerusalem Post 07.06.2018).

to Israel and Palestine that fits this purpose exactly: In one of their experiments, the researchers showed two different groups two different maps. One of the maps showed Israel and its neighboring countries, whereby Israel looks comparatively small in comparison to the neighboring countries altogether from this perspective. The other map showed the comparatively large State of Israel next to the comparatively small Palestinian territories. After having been shown the maps, the participants from both groups were asked whom they would support, Israelis or Palestinians. While the majority of the first group, perceiving Israel as an underdog, supported the Israeli side, the majority of the second group perceived the Palestinians as the underdog and supported the Palestinians in the changed constellation (Vandello et al. 2007: 1607ff.; cf. also: Prell 2002).

Figure 21: Constellation 1: Israel & Arab neighboring countries (left) and Constellation 2: Israel & Palestinian Territories (right)



Sources: left map: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arab-Israeli_Conflict_Key_Players.svg (as accessed on 08.07.2019; colors adapted; author: Oncenawhile; Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication); right map: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category: SVG_maps_of_Palestine#/media/File:Historical_region_of_Palestine_ (as_defined_by_Palestinian_Nationalism)_showing_Israel's_1948_and_1967_borders.svg (as accessed on 10.08.2020; author: Oncenawhile; Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication).

The first part of the experiment represents the constellation during the conventional wars between Israel and its neighbors before the 1980s very well. In this constellation Israel was not yet clearly the militarily superior actor and, therefore, could even present itself as an underdog (though this claim has been, in contrast

to the claim that the Palestinians are the underdogs nowadays, contested) (Rettig 2018: 19; Commentary Magazine 10/2009).

The second part, in contrast, represents the status quo today. Since the Six-Day War Israel could further increase its military strength and the international attention has shifted to the asymmetric conflict between Israel and the Palestinians since the 1980s, a constellation in which Israel clearly is in a topdog position, while the Palestinians are clearly (as previously demonstrated in section 4.1.2.) in the underdog position (Rettig 2018: 19; Commentary Magazine 10/2009).

Altogether, the results of the experiment show the cognitive effect with which the conflict actors are also confronted during the conflict in Israel and Palestine well: Amongst viewers abroad who do not have any pre-existing affiliations or relationships to the conflict parties (or at least not strong ones), it is subconsciously taken for granted that one is supposed to be empathetic with the underdog. While Israel is perceived as "Goliath" or the "topdog", the Palestinians are perceived as "David" or as the "underdog" and can profit from the underdog/topdog effect.

7.1.2 (Perceived) advantages of the underdog position and (perceived) disadvantages of the topdog position

As shown in the last section, the presence of the underdog/topdog effect was demonstrated experimentally by Vandello et al. (2007: 1607ff.). At the same time, additionally, as will be shown in this section, the presence can be observed being reflected in the observations of practitioners from the practical experience from their everyday work:

Speaking with the staff in the different branches of the Israeli administration managing the English-speaking social media channels of the corresponding government branches, it becomes evident that the staff managing the social media accounts are fully aware of that the Palestinian side is perceived as the underdog and Israel is understood to be in the topdog position. A leading official of the Israeli Government Press Office acknowledges for example: "It's true. Of course, this is such obvious trap that many foreigners fall into. When you look at the map, and when you look at the statistics, of population, of size, and of gross national product, it's very easy to figure that the Palestinian are the smaller and weaker part and Israel is the powerful and the bigger one of the two" (Isr GPO1: 41).[2]

Unsurprisingly, the interviews with officials managing the English-speaking social media accounts of the different Israeli government branches also show that

2 The idea that Israel is in a topdog/Goliath position and that this makes the strategic environment for the Israeli external communication more difficult has also been mentioned by Kretschmer (2017: 7), Diker 2002, Schleifer (2003: 123), Yarchi et al. (2017) and Hirschberger (2016).

the staff responsible for the social media channels perceives the Israeli topdog position as a disadvantage and the Palestinian underdog position as an advantage. Interestingly, however, the interviewees explain the Israeli disadvantage (and respectively the Palestinian advantage) in a very similar way to the literature on asymmetric conflicts (cf. also the summary of the state of research in the theory chapter (chapter 3, section 3.4.1.)):

Converging with Arreguín-Toft's theoretical assumption of "Weak actors will be forgiven abuses for which strong actors will be hanged" (Arreguín-Toft 2001: 106), a leading official of the Israeli Government Press Office argues that it is easier for the Palestinian side to be not perceived as the aggressor, even if Israel should not be the side attacking first, for example: "While we don't deny numbers [(statistics of population, of size, and of gross national product showing that Israel is the topdog and the Palestinian side the underdog)], we do feel that the Palestinian [side is] taking attention as the underdog in a way that twist the whole concept of the conflict. It's inconceivable for foreigners to think that the underdog, the weaker, can be the aggressor. It doesn't make any sense. I'm not sure if in the modern history there was another single example of a weaker side who is also the aggressor. When you look at Gaza, three wars took place between Israel and Gaza in the last decade. 2008, 2012, 2014. In all three of them I think it was clear to Hamas that they will not be able to beat Israel. Nevertheless, they thought this is their own interest to launch a war. So, I'm not sure if this has any example in history where the weaker chooses to attack the stronger for political needs or the propaganda benefits that comes with it. So, the Palestinians are very much playing on their underdog position in sophisticated way at times to achieve the propaganda benefits. And it's very difficult for who is considered as Goliath by some, Israel, to prove that the king is naked, that this is other way around, that this is all twisted" (Isr GPO1: 41f.).

Moreover, the explanations from another official of the Israeli Government Press Office converge well with the theoretical assumption that the underdog can present itself more easily and credibly as a victim, as it has been argued by Münkler (2005: 90f.): When being interviewed, the official argued that it was difficult to deal with the disparate perceptions because "the underdog is always more popular. Because if I lived in Europe, I think, I was pro-Palestinian, I guess, because I'm very liberal in my views and you know with the media always portrays the story of David and Goliath and unfortunately, now we're Goliath in the eyes of the foreign media. And it's always easier to feel sorry for, you know, the small Palestinian who's very poor and the situation of the Palestinians here, it's not easy. They have a very difficult life, but because of a small group of terrorists, that the rest of the population suffers" (Isr GPO2: 72f.). Similarly, a working group of Israeli government officials, practitioners from NGOs and academic experts concluded at the 2010 Herzliya Conference (Israel's most prominent annual conference on global policy) that: "The West's inclination to support the perceived weaker side of a conflict and

the Palestinians' image as such [is a challenge for Israel's external communication]. Israel's military campaigns almost, unfailingly strengthen the international community's sympathy with Israel's opponent. Even when there is sympathy for Israeli suffering or recognition of Israel's right to react, this sympathy tends to dissipate quickly as soon as hostilities commence" (Bar 2010: 75).[3]

In general, a spokesperson of the IDF claims that the "battlefield" of the Israeli side in the struggle for winning the public opinion abroad to their own side "is much more complex" than the one of the Palestinian side (Isr IDF: 37). The underdog/topdog effect makes it easier for the underdog to present itself as a victim and their opponent, in the topdog position, as the perpetrator; this makes it more difficult for Israel, as the topdog, to explain its role and actions in the conflict. Moreover, it tends to be much easier to convey simple, short arguments than complicated, lengthy ones. Following this assessment, Anshel Pfeffer, journalist for military and international affairs, argues in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that: "the great majority of people are not that interested in facts – they prefer stories. Facts and figures are fun and interesting in very small quantities and are usually absorbed when they serve a wider narrative. The number of rockets fired from Gaza on Sderot, a much beloved factoid on hasbara[4] websites, cannot change the classic underdog storyline that is a powerful and successful Israel surrounding poor, beleaguered Gaza. Neither will genocidal quotes from the Hamas covenant ever compete with pictures of suffering Palestinian children" (Haaretz 02.03.2012). Similarly, the former pilot of Israeli Airforce (IAF) and PR consultant Reuven Ben-Shalom assesses in the conservative Israeli newspaper that the strategic environment of the Israeli side is very complex: "There's no easy solution to the dispute with the Palestinians – if there is one at all – for reasons ranging from religious convictions to security considerations. Although we fight for our very existence, as long as we are in a position of power and dominance, and the Palestinians are seen as the underdogs, there's no way we can be perceived positively" (Jerusalem Post 12.06.2014).

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3 A series of (mostly Israeli) scholars reflecting about how the Israeli public diplomacy can be improved assesses the strategic environment of Israel very similarly and they come to conclusions that are very similar to the practitioners' conclusions. They also observe that it is by far easier for the underdog to present itself credibly as the victim and that this helps the underdog attracting empathy for itself. Avraham for example argues that: "The media's tendency to sympathize with the weaker side of a conflict (the Palestinians), the Arab states 'intensive exploitation of international organizations, their PR and sophisticated promotion of the 'victim image' of the Palestinians have made Israel the Goliath in the conflict" (Avraham 2009: 204; referring also to Galloway 2005; Gilboa 2006; Navon 2006).

4 "Hasbara" can be translated roughly with the English term "explain". It is the Hebrew term for "external communication". Today the Israeli practitioners rather tend to prefer the term "public diplomacy" instead, as they consider the early Hasbara efforts as too defensive (Isr MFA2: 57, 48; cf. also Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2006: 735).

Respectively, he concludes for the perception of the Israeli side in the context of the conflict that "No matter what we do, we will be victims of hypocrisy, distorted favoritism, double standards and discrimination" (Jerusalem Post 12.06.2014).

Amongst the observations of the practitioners (and fitting well to the expected underdog/topdog effect), there is an assumption that there is a tendency of audiences abroad not to have the time for great reflection on the complexity of the conflict's background, and that, therefore, the stereotypical perception of the roles of David and Goliath will prevail as a cognitive shortcut when referring to the conflict, this is also linked by Israeli officials to the general practices and logic of the media business. An official of the Israeli Government Press Office, for example, highlights, when talking about the environment in which he does his media work, that while the circumstances of the conflict and the background of the Israeli security political decisions are complex, the time resources in the media business are too limited to elaborate on the complex background: "And the people of Europe don't understand that we don't have a choice because we want to live. And every time we try to do … to go forward in the peace process, we got exploding buses in the street. But they don't understand it because they always see a journalist who comes from Germany to Israel. He doesn't have the time to learn all the story. He's come, and his editor wants a story. He came, he saw. The big Israeli with the gun and the poor Palestinian with the stick and stone. Of course, he's going to write a story that Israeli is bad, and the Palestinians are good. And the small man in Hamburg, you don't have time to, you know, to learn all the complexity of the story in Israel. Israel bad. Palestinians are good. That's it" (Isr GPO2: 72f.). The same official even sees a general media bias resulting from the simplistic reduction of the conflict on the David vs. Goliath constellation: "we have to defend ourselves all the time. Not militarily. Media-wise. Because Israel [is] always under attack. Every reporter that comes here, the first thing you think about it, he's an anti-Israel. Because the foreign media, I don't know why, but they like to bash Israel. Because maybe what we talk about, David and Goliath. They don't really understand the whole story and you know, Israel bad. Palestinians are good" (Isr GPO2: 132).

Similar to the practitioners on the Israeli side, the practitioners on the Palestinian side acknowledge the impact of the disparate roles of the conflict parties resulting from the disparate distribution of capabilities among the conflict parties (even though the corresponding statements on the Palestinian side are not as comprehensive as the Israeli ones, possibly, due the fact that from the Palestinian point of view the underdog effect is an advantage making the external communication work easier):

The manager of the social media channels for the Palestinian Mission to the United Kingdom perceives being an underdog as a good advantage to generate sympathy, for example: "Yes, yes, so there is this sense if the odds are against you, you automatically feel more sympathy and so, definitely" (Pal UK: 297). Therefore,

the use of this strategic advantage is important for the Palestinian external communication: "I think for us, yes, this is definitely [an] important strategy because, especially in Britain, people always rally for the underdog" (Pal UK: 293). Similarly, press outlets who are traditionally strongly supportive of the Pro-Palestinian cause have pointed out that being perceived as an underdog is an important advantage to be used in the struggle for international recognition and support. Avi Shlaim, emeritus professor of international relations at Oxford University, for example, notices in a contribution for the influential news outlet Aljazeera that "Large segments of the British public, motivated by the traditional British values of fair play and sympathy for the underdog, increasingly side with the Palestinians" (Aljazeera 12.01.2017).

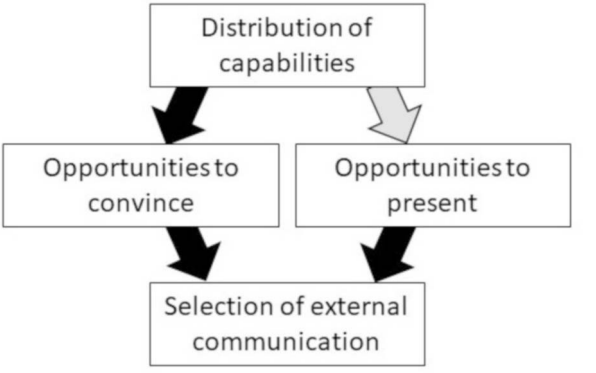
In conclusion, the Palestinian conflict parties as underdogs profit from an underdog/topdog effect, which makes it easier for them to gain empathy when referring to the conflict than for the Israeli side as topdog. This also means that it is more difficult for the Israeli side, as the topdog, to present itself as a victim than for the Palestinian side, when the acts of violence of both sides are compared. Consequently, it is less attractive for the Israeli side, as the topdog, to refer to the conflict. Shaming, however, is a strategy of external communication which especially tends to focus on the conflict, as the conflict offers the most promising reference themes (cf. section 2.2.1.). The corresponding focus on the conflict, consequently, makes it more difficult for Israel, as the topdog, to convince with shaming than for the Palestinian conflict parties, as the underdogs. For the Palestinian side, profiting from the underdog/topdog effect, in contrast, makes focusing on the conflict and using shaming as their external communication strategy highly attractive. Consequently, the Palestinian side has much better opportunities to convince audiences abroad with using shaming than the Israeli side.

7.2 Opportunities to present – Overview

Besides opportunities to convince, the strongly unequal distribution of capabilities amongst the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine also shapes different *opportunities to present* for the conflict parties. Sections 7.2. through to 7.5., therefore, show how the asymmetric distributions of military, economic & financial and social/institutional capabilities shape divergent opportunities to present for the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine (cf. overview in figure 22).

Section 7.2.1. demonstrates that opportunities to present matter greatly, as the conflict parties cannot completely fabricate the events they feature in their external communication without risking harm to their credibility. Section 7.2.2. then pro-

Figure 22: Overview – Step of the picturability pathway explored in section 7.2. (highlighted in light grey)



vides an overview of how the distribution of capabilities shapes the conflict parties' opportunities to present in the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

7.2.1 Relying on opportunities to present – The risks of faking

What the conflict parties can present, or cannot, credibly in their external communication strongly relies on what can be publicly observed about the conflict in Israel and Palestine and the involved conflict parties; i.e., the observable determines the opportunities to present of the conflict parties. The staff of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine who are in charge of the social media channels used for external communication are fully aware of this limitation. Faking pictures or stories has proved to be highly risky for the conflict parties. Both the Israeli and the Palestinian side have very negative experiences with trying to use fake images: On the Israeli side, in August 2013 the IDF added a picture of a modern, luxurious mall on its blog and claimed that the mall was in the Gaza Strip as alleged evidence that there was no humanitarian crisis in Gaza due to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. The mall in the picture, however, could be proved to be not in Gaza – the picture was from Malaysia. The revelation of the fake caused a heavy wave of criticism against the IDF (Jerusalem Post 15.08.2013). Similarly, on the Palestinian side, the Palestinian Information Center made very negative experiences when publishing a fake picture as well: Its social media staff (allegedly accidentally) posted a picture of the actress Katherine Heigl dressed up for her role in the TV series Grey's Anatomy and claimed that the person on the picture was a French doctor aiding Palestinian protesters wounded during the Gaza protests. Quickly being revealed as fake, the

Palestinian Information Center was mocked for its fake post in the social media as well as in traditional mass media (Ynet 05.04.2018; Times of Israel 05.04.2018; Jerusalem Post 04.04.2018). Trying to safeguard their credibility, in both cases the social media posts were quickly taken down by the branches that had published them and in both cases the publishing branches apologized and promised to do their best in order not to repeat the mistake (cf. Jerusalem Post 15.08.2013 respectively Jerusalem Post 04.04.2018).

7.2.2 How the distribution of capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present of the conflict parties – General pattern and different forms of capabilities

As they cannot, as shown in the last section, simply make up the events they feature in their external communication without risking harm to their credibility, the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine rely on the opportunities to present that are generated by the asymmetric structure of the conflict: The distribution of capabilities between the conflict parties shapes the behavior of the conflict parties. The behavior of the conflict parties, in turn, has consequences that are visible for third-party audiences. What is observable about the conflict (and what is not observable), in turn, determines which opportunities to present the different conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine have (cf. overview in figure 23).

This general pattern can be observed in all major dimensions of the conflict: The asymmetric distribution of military capabilities makes the conflict parties choose military strategies in a way that offers the Palestinian conflict parties, as the underdogs, more good opportunities to present for the use of shaming than for the Israeli side, as the topdog. Having more economic & financial and social/institutional capabilities, in contrast, offers the Israeli side more good opportunities to present for the use of branding (cf. overview in figure 24).

The following sections explore in detail how the distributions of capabilities in the major dimensions of the conflict shape the conflict parties' opportunities to present: Section 7.3. explores how, and which, opportunities to present are shaped by the distribution of military capabilities. Section 7.4. explores how and which opportunities to present are shaped by the distribution of economic & financial capabilities and section 7.5., finally, explores how and which opportunities to present are shaped by the distribution of social/institutional capabilities.

Figure 23: Overview – How the distribution of capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

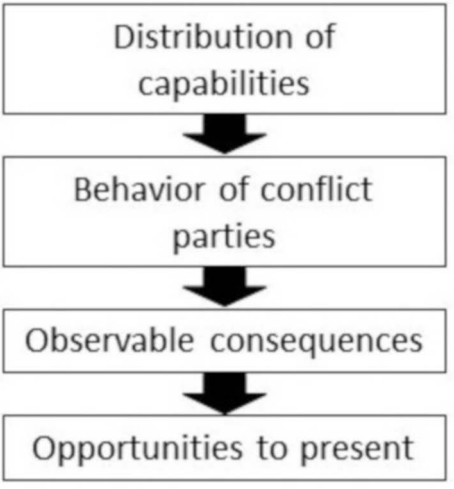
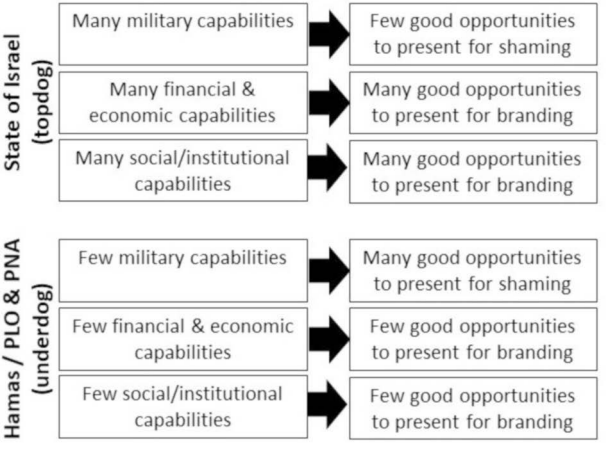


Figure 24: Overview – Distribution of different types of capabilities and resulting opportunities to present

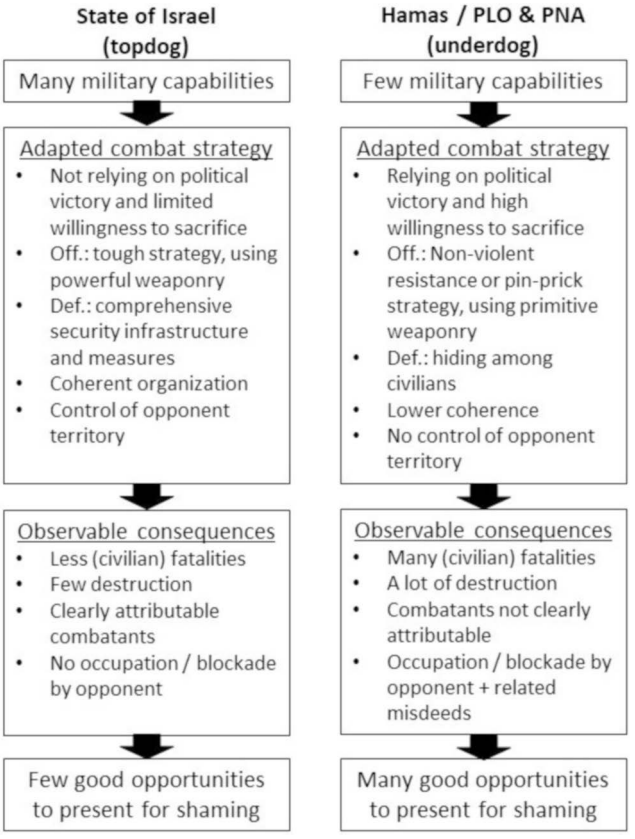


7.3 Opportunities to present – The impact of the distribution of military capabilities

Section 7.3. explores how and which opportunities to present are shaped by the distribution of military capabilities in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The distribution of military capabilities shapes the selection of the conflict parties' combat strategies. Which combat strategies are selected by the conflict parties, in turn, determines what can be observed about the conflict. What can be observed about the conflict, finally then, constitutes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties for the use of shaming:

1. The conflict parties adapt their combat strategies to the conditions provided by the asymmetric distribution of military capabilities. Having a lot of military capabilities, Israel has a powerful military, but only a low willingness to sacrifice. Consequently, Israel selects a combat strategy that minimizes the risk of civilian fatalities on their own side and embraces the risk of collateral damage on the opponents' side. Having only few military capabilities, the Palestinian side relies on political victories and has a higher willingness to sacrifice. Consequently, they choose a combat strategy that embraces the risk of collateral damage on their own side, which has the potential to harm their opponent politically, and they avoid forms of attack that might alienate potential support abroad. Furthermore, having a lot of military capabilities makes the Israeli side powerful enough to control territory claimed, and partially also populated, by a population identifying itself with the opponent and means that they can effectively exert a monopoly of violence, allowing a more centralized structure.
2. The selection of combat strategies, in turn, determines what is observable of the conflict: Most notably, the selected combat strategies cause much more fatalities and damage on the Palestinian side than on the Israeli side, and among these fatalities especially there are comparatively many civilian fatalities on the Palestinian side. Furthermore, the acts of violence of the Israeli side, having uniforms and a comparatively centralized structure, tend to be more clearly attributable than the acts of violence of the Palestinian side. Finally, as only the Israeli side has control over territory populated by population identifying themselves with the opponent, only the Palestinian side is affected by practices of occupation and blockading.
3. Consequently, as the previously mentioned acts of violence and the occupation are particularly promising themes for shaming, the pictures and stories from the observable events of the conflict offer more promising opportunities to present for the use of shaming for the Palestinian side than for the Israeli side.

Figure 25: Overview – How the distribution of military capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine



7.3.1 The adaptation of combat strategies to the asymmetric conflict strategies

The asymmetric distribution of military capabilities amongst the conflict parties makes the Israeli side adopting a different combat strategy than the Palestinian conflict parties:

Strategic options to win and willingness to sacrifice

Israel as topdog has by far more military capabilities. As shown in section 4.1.2.1., Israel can afford expensive military equipment, including aircraft, well-trained special forces and heavy weaponry, for example. The PLO & the PNA and Hamas as underdogs, in contrast, have only few military capabilities. Both actors, for example, have comparatively simple weaponry and also their military budget and manpower are lower. This clear military superiority gives the Israeli side the option to contain their opponents in the asymmetric conflicts by force, even though politically such measures are not unproblematic, as they are often perceived negatively by the international public and the international community. The Palestinian conflict parties, being by far militarily less powerful, in contrast, do not have any realistic chance to score a military victory. Consequently, unlike the Israeli side, the Palestinian side purely relies on the possibility of a political victory.

Furthermore, the asymmetric distribution of capabilities influences also the willingness amongst the population for sacrifices: On the Palestinian side, being very dissatisfied with the status quo (cf. section 6.1.2.), sacrifices for the "freedom" and "resistance" fight are accepted and even glorified as "martyrdom" (Awad 1984: 29). On the Israeli side, being comparatively satisfied with the status quo (cf. section 6.1.2.) and having strong military options, as the more powerful side, the willingness to sacrifice is very low (cf. e.g. Tagesschau 30.07.2014**;** aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018**)**.

Both the available strategic options to win and the willingness to sacrifice within one's own population influence the combat tactics of the conflict parties strongly, as the following sections show.

Defensive combat tactics

Having much more military capabilities and being, therefore, much better equipped for conventional warfare, Israel could very likely defeat the Palestinian combatants easily in a confrontation on an open battlefield.[5] At the same time, the willingness to sacrifice is comparatively high within the Palestinian population and the Palestinian side relies on political victories to make a change in the conflict, as their prospects for scoring a military victory against Israel are very low.

These conditions constituted by the asymmetric conflict structure make it attractive for Hamas (which is the dominant actively combating collective actor on

5 Indeed, the few times a Palestinian faction tried to confront Israel with means of conventional warfare they failed badly: For example, the PLO suffered severe losses during the Lebanon War in 1982 and was finally expelled from Lebanon, when they employed semi-conventional tactics instead of purely relying on non-conventional tactics to try to fight off their Israeli opponents, whose capabilities for conventional warfare were by far superior (Daase 1999: 178; 169f.).

the Palestinian side since the 2005 ceasefire with the Fatah-dominated PNA), as the underdog, to adapt their defensive combat strategy to these conditions by hiding their combatants and leaders from attacks by their topdog opponent among their own civil population: On the one hand, such a strategy has the potential to deter Israel, which as member of the international community is expected to respect the rules of the humanitarian law, from attacking, as such an attack would risk killing civilians. On the other hand, even if the Israeli side embraces the risk of civilian collateral damage, the resulting damage among civilians can be used as political ammunition against Israel and has the potential to trigger an international outrage (Flibbert 2011; Münkler 2004: 180; Guiora 2004: 329), this is particularly useful for Hamas, as they rely on a political victory. Furthermore, using such a strategy becomes possible, as the willingness to sacrifice within the civil population is comparatively high and, therefore, support from within the civil population for such a strategy can be expected.

Indeed, Hamas has been criticized frequently internationally for risking the lives of Palestinian civilians (cf. e.g. Adams 2014; Human Rights Watch – World Report 2015) and even of provoking fatalities by using the civil population as "human shields" to use the resulting pictures and stories of civilian casualties against Israel (cf. e.g. Globe and Mail 12.05.2018; European Parliament 2018/2663(RSP); Congressional Record 2018: H1146f.[6]). Such accusations have also been confirmed by observations made by independent observers, such as human rights NGOs, which have, for example, observed that Hamas and its combatants have launched and stored rockets among civilians, on multiple occasions (cf. e.g. Human Rights Watch – World Report 2015; Atlantic 12.09.2014; United Nations Human Rights Council 25.09.2009 – "Goldstone Report"; cf. also Rubinstein & Roznai 2011: 106).[7]

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6 In the context of the recent border protests in Gaza, the European Parliament expressed, for example, in its resolution of the 19th of April 2018 on the situation in the Gaza Strip "its concern that Hamas seems to be aiming at escalating tensions" and condemned "the persistent tactic of Hamas of using civilians for the purpose of shielding terrorist activities" (European Parliament 2018/2663(RSP); cf. also Times of Israel 19.04.2018). A bit earlier the US House of Representatives already had adopted unanimously the "Hamas Human Shields Prevention Act" with similar accusations (Congressional Record 2018: H1146f.).

7 In its 2015 report the NGO Human Rights Watch, for example, noted that Palestinian fighters "endangered civilians by launching rockets from populated areas" (Human Rights Watch – World Report 2015). And despite being described by the Israeli government as one-sided and politically motivated (Israeli MFA 2013), also the report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict in 2008/2009, also known as the Goldstone Report, acknowledges that "there are indications that Palestinian armed groups launched rockets from urban areas" (United Nations Human Rights Council 25.09.2009; cf. also Rubinstein & Roznai 2011: 106). Furthermore, rockets were found stored in civilian buildings (cf. also Atlantic 12.09.2014). For example, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reported that rockets were stored in schools it took care of (UN-

Moreover, to prove their claims that Hamas uses human shields the IDF presented an alleged Hamas manual describing its preference to operate within a civilian environment to make it more difficult for the Israeli enemy to target Hamas without causing casualties and that the destruction of civilian homes is useful for Hamas, as it creates an outrage against Israel, thus creating additional support (IDF 04.08.2014). Both Israeli government sources (cf. e.g. Israeli MFA 11.07.2014; IDF on YouTube 09.07.2014[8] and 18.07.2014;[9] cf. also Yair Lapid, former Israeli Minister of Finance and chairman of the Yesh Atid Party, in Telegraph 23.07.2014) and international media (cf. e.g. Channel 4 24.07.2014; Globe and Mail 12.05.2018; Times of Israel 10.07.2014; American Interest 05.08.2014; cf. also Rehov 2014) have repeatedly presented translations of Arabic media statements from Hamas officials calling on the Palestinian civil population to remain in combat areas to support Hamas' combat efforts. Sami Abu Zuhri, a senior spokesperson of Hamas, for example, argued on the program of the Hamas-affiliated al Aqsa TV that "The policy of people confronting the Israeli warplanes with their bare chests in order to protect their homes has proven effective against the occupation… we in Hamas call upon our people to adopt this policy in order to protect the Palestinian homes" (Channel 4 24.07.2014; Globe and Mail 12.05.2018; Times of Israel 10.07.2014[10]).

In contrast, being privileged by the conflict structure, the willingness to sacrifice within the Israeli civil population is low. Furthermore, having a lot of economic & financial capabilities allows investment in expensive security infrastructure, and having a lot of military capabilities allows the implementation of tough security measures. Even though "bleeding" more might help the Israeli side to attract more international empathy, the Israeli side tries to avoid civil fatalities on their own side and instead has heavily invested in a comprehensive security infrastructure, employing tough security measures as "deterrence by denial" in their combat strategy in order to make it more difficult for Israel's opponents to attack their forces or

RWA 22.07.2014). Further similar observations were also reported by Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2015: 37ff.; Amnesty International USA 2009; Amnesty International UK 26.03.2015).

8 Israel Defense Forces on their English-speaking YouTube channel (09.07.2014) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXZEzbToH1s) (source accessed on: 10.07.2019).

9 Israel Defense Forces on their English-speaking YouTube channel (18.07.2014) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzFgIhFKII8) (source accessed on: 10.07.2019).

10 While there is no contestation of the accuracy of the translation, it needs to be noted that the original source of the translated quote is likely for all the news articles the website of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) (link to online source: https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-spokesman-encourages-gazans-serve-human-shields-its-been-proven-effective/transcript, source accessed on 10.07.2019), an NGO that has often been accused to be biased to the detriment of the Arab and Muslim world (Hudson 2005).

its civil population (Kirchofer 2017):[11] Israel's security infrastructure includes the construction of security barriers at the border of Israel with the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, for example (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.3.1). People, goods and vehicles can pass the barriers only after thorough checks. The fortification at the Gaza border even includes an underground wall with modern sensor technology in order to prevent the construction of enemy tunnels that could be used for smuggling or attacks (NPR 24.01.2018; Al-Monitor 15.01.2019). Furthermore, having a lot of economic & financial capabilities[12] has allowed Israel to invest in building up and maintaining a system for interfering rockets and artillery shells – the "Iron Dome" (Shapir 2013). Several publications estimate the reliability of Israel's rocket defense system and the connected Red-Alert system as high as 99% (Cohen-Lazry & Oron-Gilad 2016: 26). Being the more powerful and rich actor allows it Israel, moreover, to realize comprehensive security measures, such as imposing curfews (cf. e.g. Haaretz 29.09.2017), establishing checkpoints (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.3.2) and funding and implementing comprehensive anti-terror measures (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.4). Due to the low willingness to sacrifice of its population, Israel also does not shy away from employing such tough measures, even though these measures negatively affect the Palestinian population, as it expects the measures to reduce the fatalities on its own side.

Offensive combat tactics

The asymmetric distribution of capabilities shapes also the offensive combat tactics of the conflict parties: As they, having much fewer military capabilities, would be likely to fail badly when confronting Israel with means of conventional warfare, the Palestinian conflict parties have avoided open confrontations with Israel and instead have been employing guerilla and insurgency tactics (Daase 1999: 165, 173). At the same time, even with such unconventional tactics, however, having only few capabilities, the Palestinian side cannot expect to score a military victory but relies

11 In an interview with Richard C. Schneider from the German Tagesschau Jaakov Amidror, former chief of Israel's National Security Council, argues that the "media war" for Israel had already been lost before the actual war started, as Israel does not want to make sacrifices: "We know that we would have a much better standing with the European Community, if we would bleed. Yet, we do not intend to bleed again. That is the reason why the State of Israel exists" (translated to English from Tagesschau 30.07.2014). Similarly, when during the Operation Protective Edge in 2014 Peter Learner, then head of the IDF's Spokesperson's Foreign and Social Media Unit, was confronted by the press with the argument that the Israelis were not leading in the media struggle because they were not "bleeding" ("Peter, it's the old rule: if it bleeds it leads."), Lerner unequivocally reaffirmed that Israel is not willing to embrace any sacrifices on its own side ("We don't want to bleed") (aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018).

12 One rocket is estimated to cost 20,000 US dollars. To interfere an enemy rocket typically two rockets are required (Stern 28.03.2019).

on achieving a political victory, instead. Such a political victory is most likely to be achieved as a consequence of international pressure on the Israeli side. Since they had managed to establish[13] themselves as conflict parties that are perceived domestically and internationally as relevant actors, both the PLO & the PNA and Hamas have avoided particularly spectacular and harmful forms of attack and have chosen offensive combat tactics that allow them to balance the trade-off between the domestic reputational gains of being able to present themselves domestically as a resolute force of the Palestinian resistance and the potential reputational losses in the international public (as well as the costs of Israeli retaliations against the Palestinian leadership provoked by particularly gruesome attacks) (cf. also Toronto 2008): The PLO & the PNA have abandoned the military struggle almost completely and rely, having established themselves as the primary representation of the Palestinians, on means of non-violent resistance now.[14] Hamas has also de facto abandoned forms of attack that are perceived as particularly gruesome, such as suicide bombing and now, having managed to establish itself as the dominant force in the Gaza Strip and being aware of relying on political solutions,[15] mostly employs forms of attack that harm comparatively few civilians, such as rocket attacks

13 About the role of establishment cf. the chapter A.1.5. "Adaptations of the Palestinian offensive combat tactics and external communication strategies during the process of establishment" in the online annex.

14 Already in 1974, PLO leader Yasir Arafat spoke out against terror attacks on targets outside of Israel and Palestine (Hoffman 1986: 2; Lacey 2007) and in 1988 on several occasions Arafat renounced "terrorism in all its forms" and spoke himself out against attacks outside of the occupied Palestinian Territories (Boyle 1990: 304; Arafat 1988 – speech at the UN General Assembly; Daase 1999: 179). Later, when the terrorist violence resurged during the Second Intifada, and a militia called al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claiming to be Fatah's military arm emerged, Fatah avoided to officially recognize such ties and shied away from openly backing the group (ECFR 2018: 24). In 2002, reportedly leaders of Fatah even pressurized the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades not to attack Israeli civilians (Stork & Kane 2002: 78). While it has remained difficult for the PLO & the PNA leadership to control the actions of all the different militant factions, it committed on several occasions, such as the 2005 ceasefire agreement, to non-violence (Guardian 08.02.2005). During the last years also the number and extent of terrorist activities of militant groups sympathizing with the Fatah and the PLO have decreased. In 2010, after many of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activists had been killed or captured by Israel, the group even renounced violence and surrendered its weapons to the PNA (ECFR 2018: 24).

15 The inability to achieve successes with military means made it interesting for Hamas to try to increase its scope of action by more and more taking into account political solutions. This shift to a stronger focus on the political (which shares similarities to the earlier shift of PLO and Fatah to the political) becomes also visible in recent statements of individual Hamas leaders (Hroub 2017: 104f.) and a recent position paper of the Hamas leadership as a whole from 2017 (Hroub 2017: 106) showing a careful softening of Hamas' language, an increased political pragmatism (Hroub 2017: 110) and the desire to be recognized internationally as a legitimate negotiating party (Hroub 2017: 110; Ynet 05.10.2018).

(Toronto 2008), stabbings (cf. e.g. Human Rights Watch – World Report 2017) and arson attacks (cf. e.g. Times of Israel 20.02.2019) or even non-violent forms like the border protests in the Gaza Strip since 2018 (cf. e.g. Times of Israel 26.04.2018). In 2014, Hamas politburo chief Meshal even claimed that Hamas targets only military targets and no civilians at all with their attacks: "We do not target civilians, and we try most of the time to aim at military targets and Israeli bases" (Haaretz 23.08.2014; Jerusalem Post 23.08.2014).

The adaptations of the Palestinian side also force Israel to adapt its offensive combat strategy: The Israeli side is militarily by far superior. Having a lot of capabilities means, for example, that Israel can afford, access and employ superior weaponry with stronger firepower, including modern aircraft, heavy artillery, drones and heavily armor-clad marine vessels (cf. section 4.1.2.1.). Unlike the Palestinian side, consequently, the Israeli side has the option to contain their opponents by force with military means. Whilst such a tough combat strategy is perceived by the Israeli leadership to be a successful way of preventing Palestinian combatants from building up and maintaining the infrastructure required for attacks on Israel (Almog 2004-05: 13, 17), such tough combat measures pose the risk of civilian collateral damage on the Palestinian side. As the willingness to sacrifice within the Israeli population is very low, however, any alternative solution which would potentially risk the lives of one's own population is very unpopular and so Israel embraces the risk of collateral damage on the Palestinian side and employs very tough and offensive military measures:[16] According to Major General Doron Almog, former head of the IDF Southern Command and recipient of the Israel Prize, Israel adopted a "cumulative deterrence strategy" instead of a conventional deterrence strategy. In contrast to a classical deterrence strategy, Israel's deterrence strategy does not merely rely on being able to make credible threats but on the repeated active use of force as well (Almog 2004-05: 12). This use of force has often included particularly tough measures. The measures have included, for example, numerous airstrikes and artillery fire against enemy targets in or close to civilian infrastructures (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.2.1). It has also been a common practice to employ collective punishments, such as the demolition of the houses of the suicide bombers' families (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.2.4). Furthermore, the measures have included targeted killings by the IDF and the Israeli security agency Shin Bet, deportations (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.2.2 & 5.2.3), as well as the creation of new special units specializing in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (Kfir 2018). A high number of Palestinians have also been detained: In 2016, 6,000 Palestinians were detained. In 2007, even 9,000

16 This complies well with the theoretical expectations formulated by Magnet 2017, Arreguín-Toft (2001: 101f., 105) about "barbarism", Guiora (2004: 329) on the topic of targeted killing and civilian collateral damage and Downes (2008: 37f.) discussing the (perceived) strategic value of victimizing civilians.

Palestinians were detained (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.2.5). The Israeli military and political leadership believe that such extensive and aggressive countermeasures can deter their opponents (Kfir 2018), weakening the morale of the enemy combatants, hamper enlistment efforts and deter potential collaborators (Elnakhala s.a.: 5.2).

Coordination of combatants – Degree of cohesion and centralization

Moreover, the distribution of military (as well as social/institutional) capabilities also affects the coordination of the conflict parties' combatants: Having many capabilities and being a developed state, the Israeli side can effectively exert its monopoly of violence and has, for this reason, a more cohesive, centralized structure than the Palestinian conflict parties. Most acts of violence on the Israeli side against Palestinians are conducted by the Israeli military or the Israeli security forces.[17] In contrast, having only few capabilities and not yet developed strong state structures, neither Hamas nor the PLO & the PNA have full control over all Palestinian militias and fighters operating in the Palestinian territories. The leadership of the PLO & the PNA have even had problems controlling the activities of groups such as the Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, even though the group claims to be the military arm of Fatah, the Palestinian party also dominating the leadership of the PLO & the PNA (ECFR 2018: 24; Stork & Kane 2002: 78). Occasionally, some of the minor factions of the PLO, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), have conducted attacks against the will of the PLO leadership, as well. Like the PLO & the PNA in the West Bank, Hamas in the Gaza Strip has proved to be unable to exert a monopoly of violence. Especially the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) has conducted attacks without the consent of Hamas on multiple occasions (cf. e.g. Times of Israel 24.01.2019). Furthermore, many terrorist attacks have been conducted by attackers without any clear association with any of the militant Palestinian groups, by so-called "lone wolfs" (Chorev 2017).

Territorial control

Furthermore, having a lot of military capabilities makes it possible for Israel to control territories that are claimed by the Palestinian conflict parties and that are inhabited by a population considering itself as part of the opponent side: The State of Israel still occupies wide parts of the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem and blockades the Gaza Strip together with Egypt. Having much less power, the Palestinian conflict parties are not able to reciprocally exert control over territory that is recognized as Israeli territory.

17 Exceptions on the Israeli side are the settler violence and "price tag terrorism" (cf. also Eiran & Krause 2018). Both do, however, not have the same extent as the sum of attacks from lone wolfs and out of control militias on the Palestinian side.

7.3.2 Observable consequences of the divergent combat strategies

As they have chosen different combat strategies, also what is observable of the behavior of the different conflict parties in the conflict differs: Most notably, the selected combat strategies cause many more fatalities and much more damage on the Palestinian side than on the Israeli side and among these fatalities especially also particularly many civilian fatalities on the Palestinian side. Furthermore, the acts of violence of the Israeli side tend to be more clearly attributable than the acts of violence of the Palestinian side. Finally, as only Israel has control over territory populated by a population identifying itself with the opponent, only the Palestinian side is affected by practices of occupation and blockade:

Victimhood in numbers

As a result of the selected combat strategies of the conflict parties, many more (especially many more civilian) fatalities can be observed on the Palestinian side than on the Israeli side:

The defensive combat tactics of Hamas and the offensive combat tactics of Israel both embrace the risk of civilian collateral damage within the Palestinian civil population and a high number of fatalities on the Palestinian side in general. Consequently, it can be expected that the number of fatalities, and the number of civilian fatalities in particular, on the Palestinian side are exceptionally high. In contrast, according to expert assessments, Israel's security infrastructure and security measures could, indeed, decrease the number of fatalities and the number of civilian fatalities on the Israeli side, in particular (Kirchofer 2017). The selection of offensive combat tactics on the Palestinian side contributes to keeping the number of civilian fatalities on the Israeli side low in comparison to the number of fatalities on the Palestinian side, as the PLO & the PNA focus on non-violent resistance and also Hamas abstains (at least since having become more established) from particularly harmful forms of attack, such as suicide bombings, and instead (at least allegedly) focuses on military targets. Indeed, these trends are reflected in the overall statistics of fatalities in the ongoing conflict: According to the records of B'TSELEM,[18] during the timeframe from January 2008 to March 2018 each month 1.58 Israelis were killed by Palestinians during the conflict including 0.29 civilians on Israeli territory and 0.48 civilians in the West Bank on average. In contrast, 28.36 Palestinians were killed on average each month by Israeli military and security forces from which B'TSELEM could identify only 9.62 of them clearly as combatants. Excluding the particularly intensive phases of the conflict during this timeframe (Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012, the Gaza War in 2014 and the 2018 Gaza border protests) on average 0.93 Israelis were killed by Palestinians during the conflict, including

18 Calculated based on data from B'TSELEM 20.03.2018.

0.20 civilians on Israeli territory each month and 0.49 civilians in the West Bank and 6.88 Palestinians were killed on average each month by Israeli military and security forces, of which B'TSELEM could identify only 2.38 clearly as combatants.

Spectacularity of the attacks and their damage

The modern and powerful weapons of Israel and their damage are more spectacular than the comparatively primitive weapons of the Palestinian side and their damage:

On the one hand, the stronger firepower of the modern Israeli weaponry[19] causes more damage than the comparatively primitive weaponry of the Palestinian side. On the other hand, even apart from the actually caused damage, their technological superiority makes the Israeli weaponry appear more harmful and threatening. Just as David's slingshot in the tale of David and Goliath has not been perceived as threatening as the overwhelming power of the giant Goliath, in comparison to Israel's powerful high-tech weapons the simple weapons used by the Palestinian side are perceived as primitive. Knives, stone-throwing and arson kites might be still dangerous, but they appear comparatively primitive and less spectacular than the Israeli weaponry. The pictures and stories resulting from the corresponding acts of violence are, therefore, less spectacular. This argumentation has been also used by the Jewish author Matt Axelrod in the Jewish online magazines The Tablet and aish.com. Reflecting on the opportunities of Israel in its "Social Media War", he assesses for the period of the Gaza border protests in 2018: "In response, the IDF social media unit can produce images of Gazans hurling Molotov cocktails and rocks at its soldiers, of them setting kites on fire to burn nature preserves and farms, but those images cannot compete with the images of IDF soldiers firing live ammunition and dead Palestinians, even if many of them are discovered – much later in the social media news cycle – to be Hamas terrorists" (aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018).

Attributibility and recognizability of combatants

Additionally, not only more fatalities can be observed on the Palestinian side, but the Israeli acts of violence are also easier attributable, and the Israeli combatants tend to be more easily recognizable than Palestinian ones:

A part of the Palestinian combat strategy, as argued above, is it to hide among the civil population. To make it easier to hide often the Palestinian combatants

19 The firepower of the modern weaponry can cause spectacular damage. This makes this heavy weaponry a powerful military leverage. Despite ongoing efforts in the development of such weaponry to increase the accuracy of these weapons, however, their power is also still hard to control. Therefore, their use in conflicts like the conflict in Israel and Palestine can lead to a collateral damage of numerous civilian fatalities.

from Hamas and other groups do not wear uniforms or any other symbol identifying them as combatants and are, therefore, difficult to be distinguished from civilians.[20] The combatants on the Israeli side, in contrast, are easily recognizable. The violence is mostly exerted by the IDF and the Israeli security forces. Both the soldiers and the staff of the security forces wear uniforms and emblems clearly identifying them as such (IDF 16.06.2013). Amongst the Israeli fatalities it can be, therefore, comparatively easily distinguished between civilian and combatant casualties. All Israelis killed in the role of a combatant are also easily recognizable as such. In contrast to the Palestinian side, the Israeli side does not have, therefore, the option to lie about fatalities on their side with the pictures and stories.

Furthermore, many of the violent incidents, in which Palestinians are the attackers, the actors are not officially part of Hamas or the PLO & the PNA but of other militant splinter groups or not part of any organization at all ("lone wolfs"). The consequently often unclear attributability gives Hamas and the PLO & the PNA the opportunity to excuse the corresponding acts of extreme violence by pointing out that they themselves do not have control over the groups conducting the violence and, therefore, have the opportunity to deny the responsibility for them (cf. the logic of "excusing" as defined in Jetschke 2011: 46). The weak attributability to Hamas and respectively to the PLO & the PNA makes the corresponding pictures and stories of extreme violence less qualified to portray the corresponding conflict parties as perpetrators. Exerting its monopoly of violence effectively, on the Israeli side, in contrast, most of the acts of violence are clearly attributable to the State of

20 While such a behavior is problematic from the point of view of the humanitarian law, pro-Israeli sources argue that Hamas instrumentalizes this practice by purpose to protect its own fighters and to provoke outrage against the Israeli side about potential civilian collateral damage. Indeed, they could present as evidence a manual published by Hamas that asks social media activists to describe all Palestinian victims as "innocent civilians" and not to show Hamas fighters, trying this way actively to further lower the attributability of violent acts to itself (American Interest 05.08.2014; MEMRI 17.07.2014; Times of Israel 11.07.2014). Indeed, for third-party observers, such as the press, it has proved often to be very complicated to distinguish between civilian victims and combatants. In cases where the status of the victims is unclear typically, however, the victims are also not described as combatants (or partially even counted as civilian victims) (Forbes 21.08.2014). Therefore, the pro-Israeli side has been complaining about a bias of the international press to report about "combatants" as "victims" (cf. e.g. Times of Israel 07.08.2014; cf. also New York Times 05.08.2014; Pro-Israeli authors point out especially the disproportionally high share of young, male victims among the Palestinian fatalities, the demographic group most likely to be combatants, cf. TIME Magazine 29.07.2014). Some government representatives even claim that the international press often labels combatants as "civilians", even in cases in which combatants are clearly identifiable as combatants. A representative of the Israeli Government Press Office, for example, complained about that even the attackers of terror attacks are often not labeled as "terrorists" in news reports but as "victims" (Isr GPO1: 80f.).

Israel itself (in the form of its army and security forces). Consequently, the State of Israel has not got the option to excuse these acts of violence by denying its responsibility. The resulting pictures and stories are pictures and stories with a clearly attributable perpetrator.

The visible consequences of the occupation and the Gaza blockade

Finally, as only the Israeli side has control over territory populated by a population identifying itself with the opponent, it is only the Palestinian side who is affected by practices of occupation and blockading:

On the one hand, observable consequences of exerting control over territory populated by a population identifying itself with the opponent are the acts of the occupation of large parts of the Palestinian territories and the blockade of the Gaza Strip, these actions are considered to be illegitimate practices by themselves from the point of view of the international law (Erakat 2011/12; Haaretz 13.09.2011). On the other hand, misdeeds of Israeli military security forces occurring in the context of the occupation are visible, as well: Exerting control over a territory which is inhabited by a population considering itself as part of the opponent Palestinian side also means that the Israeli side, unlike the Palestinian side, needs to govern such a territory and the population therein. The asymmetric power relationship between the occupying Israeli forces and the Palestinian civil population that they govern creates a setting which offers individuals on the powerful side the opportunity to abuse their position of power and the risk of facilitating opportunistic violence of the occupying forces against the governed civil population (Manekin 2013: 1278), especially when they are employed for a longer duration (Manekin 2013: 1288). Indeed, human rights organizations have collected a long list of misdeeds conducted by Israeli soldiers within the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli NGO "Breaking the Silence", for example, has collected a comprehensive database of testimonies where Israeli soldiers report (alleged) misbehavior of members of the Israeli military, including (alleged) misdeeds such as e.g. the destruction of Palestinian property, looting, restrictions of movement and even acts of physical violence against civilians (cf. e.g. Breaking the Silence 09.07.2019).

7.3.3 Resulting opportunities to present

What is observable about the conflict, in turn, offers more promising opportunities to present for the use of shaming for the Palestinian side rather than for the Israeli side:

As discussed in section 2.2.1., pictures and stories that are particularly promising for shaming are, on the one hand, pictures and stories representing particularly extreme acts of physical violence and, on the other hand, pictures and stories representing structural violence and disadvantages that are perceived as injustices.

Thereby, violence is perceived as particularly extreme, when (a) the damage is particularly extensive and the number of human casualties is particularly high (cf. also Clarke et al. 2015: 25ff.), (b) if the action causing the damage and casualties is clearly attributable to a conflict party and (c) if the victims belong to a group that typically is perceived as particularly vulnerable (cf. also Münkler 2005: 90). As the observations in the last section show, what is observable about the conflict, consequently, offers much more pictures and stories fulfilling these criteria for the Palestinian side than for their Israeli counterparts:

1. Suffering from many more fatalities, including a comparatively large number of civilian fatalities, the Palestinian side has many more opportunities to produce and spread pictures and stories about suffering from extreme acts of violence of the opponent.
2. The modern Israeli weaponry is more spectacular than the comparatively primitive Palestinian weaponry. The firepower of the Israeli weaponry and the damage it can cause are bigger than the firepower and the damage the Palestinian weaponry can cause.
3. Furthermore, the Israeli acts of violence tend to be more easily recognizable and attributable than the Palestinian ones, making the Israeli side an easy target for shaming.
4. Only the Palestinian conflict parties can shame the opponent for their occupation and blockade policies and the misdeeds of Israelis conducted in the context of these policies.

Consequently, in the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine, the Palestinian side is presented with more opportunities to produce and disseminate pictures and stories that are particularly promising for the use of shaming their opponent. In conclusion, the Palestinian side has much better opportunities to present for the use of shaming than the Israeli side.

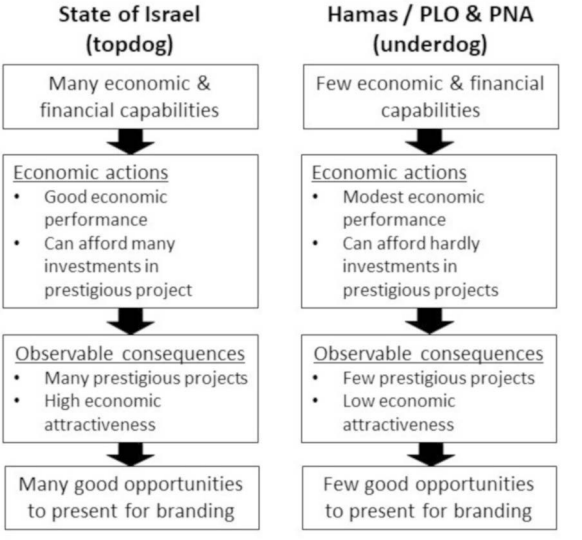
7.4 Opportunities to present – The impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities

Like the distribution of military capabilities, the distribution of economic & financial capabilities also shapes divergent opportunities to present:

The distribution of economic & financial capabilities reflects how well a conflict party performs economically and how much the party can invest in prestigious projects. The results of the economic performance and such investments can also be observed by third-party audiences: Israel, the topdog, having a larger economy, is more attractive as a potential economic partner than the Palestinian side and

it has more prestigious projects it can show off. Both the economic attractiveness and the prestigious projects offer very promising pictures and stories for branding. Consequently, Israel has much better opportunities to present for the use of branding.

Figure 26: Overview – How the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine



Section 7.4.1. illustrates the general pattern of how the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present for the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine. Following the methodological requirements of pattern-matching for theory-testing, section 7.4.2. then, additionally, presents examples of the pattern's occurrence in various specific areas.

7.4.1 General pattern: How the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present of the conflict parties

The following section illustrates the general pattern of how the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present in the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine: First, it is shown that the distribution of eco-

nomic & financial capabilities reflects how well Israel and the Palestinian territories perform economically and how much the conflict parties can invest in prestigious projects and that the results of the economic performance and such investments are also visible for third-party audiences in the form of economic attractiveness and in the form of realized prestigious projects, as well. Then, in a second step, it is explained that, as the economic attractiveness and the prestigious projects offer very promising pictures and stories for branding, Israel has much better opportunities to present for the use of branding than the Palestinian conflict parties.

Economic actions and their observable consequences

As shown in section 4.1.2.2. Israel has much more economic & financial capabilities than the Palestinian conflict parties. Israel has e.g. a much higher GDP and a much more developed economic environment than the Palestinian Territories. Having accumulated much more economic & financial capabilities and being able to offer a stable environment, Israel is provided with better conditions to flourish economically in contrast to the Palestinian side. Israel has a strong economy and offers a much bigger market than the Palestinian Territories.[21] Israel also has a strong and diverse high-tech industry[22] and has been able to develop a thriving start-up culture, which is admired worldwide.[23] The Palestinian side, in contrast, lacks such high-tech and high-profit sectors and is predominated by the administration, agriculture, retail and services, construction, manufacturing and mining sectors (UNSCO 2017: 2; Office of the Quartet 2018). The better economic performance of the Israeli side is acknowledged also abroad and makes Israel both economically and financially to a more interesting trading partner, as well as a more interesting target for foreign investments.

Furthermore, having a lot of economic & financial capabilities allows the Israeli side to invest much more in expensive, prestigious projects in contrast to the Palestinian side. Indeed, Israel heavily invests in a variety of areas in corresponding projects. As a result, Israel can show off, for example, outstanding projects in fields such as research and technology, culture and arts, humanitarian and development

21 Cf. e.g. the following assessment of the import-export consultancy firm Alliance Experts: Alliance Experts s.a..

22 CIA World Factbook (20.06.2018): Country Report Israel.

23 The good economic conditions in Israel (combined with a comparatively open social climate, especially in Tel Aviv) allowed the Israeli start-up culture to emerge and grow. Additionally, Senor & Singer (2009) present in their book "Start-Up Nation – The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle" the argument that the success of the Israeli start-up culture can be attributed to the professional organization of the military and the long military service (Senor & Singer 2009: chapter 2), which is mandatory for almost every citizen in Israel, and the high immigration rate (Senor & Singer 2009: chapter 7), dismissing the idea of an "ethnic or religious exceptionalism" (Jong et al. 2016: 72).

aid and sports, including e.g. their own space program,[24] big festivals[25] and major international sports events.[26] The Palestinian side, having only few economic & financial capabilities, in contrast, can hardly afford to invest in such prestigious projects (cf. also section 7.4.2.).

Resulting opportunities to present

What can be observed about the consequences of the conflict parties' economic actions constitutes more opportunities to present for the use of branding for the Israeli side than for the Palestinian side:

As discussed in section 2.2.2., pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding are (a) pictures or stories that feature something that makes it easy for the target audience to identify itself with the communicating actor (Percy & Rossiter 1992: 271; cf. also Galtung & Ruge 1965: 81 ff.; Luhmann 1996: 60f.; the concept of "brand personality" in marketing research, e.g. Aaker 1997), (b) pictures or stories that credibly signal the target audience a significant potential benefit for itself (cf. also the basic concept of "profit motive" in economic studies, e.g. Lux 2003), and (c) pictures or stories that feature something that stands out from the average and is particularly prestigious or is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative (cf. also Schultz 2007: 191ff.; e.g. Luhmann 1996: 58f.; Galtung & Ruge 1965: 82f.).[27] As the observations in the last section show, what is observable about

24 Recently the Israel Space Agency even funded a mission sending a spacecraft to the moon (ISA 21.02.2019).

25 E.g. for anniversaries of the State of Israel (Times of Israel 15.01.2018).

26 For an overview of sports events hosted in Israel cf., for example, Tourist Israel 2019; Israel Ministry of Tourism 2019.

27 Indeed, corresponding criteria are used as selection criteria in the social media work of the conflict parties. Being aware of the "information overload" (Latar et al. 2010: 64f.; cf. also Dave Sharma, Australian ambassador to Israel, in Times of Israel 20.09.2016) in the modern digitalized society and media landscape, the conflict parties select only content for their social media messages from which they expect to be perceived by their target audience as relevant and interesting. With spreading information that is non-relevant for the target audience, they would risk losing the attention of their target audience. The staff in the Israeli Government Press Office, for example, argues: "We don't like to spread the useless or not interesting information because then we will be blocked and people will stop listening to us, so we need to be focused and we need to think if what we send has a true journalistic value" (Isr GPO1: 65). Therefore, the conflict parties want their social media messages to be relevant to the daily lives of their target audiences and to touch them personally. The spokesperson's unit of COGAT, for example, explains: "you want to touch the daily life of the people. Because this is the reason, why they will enter and respond" (Isr COGAT: 8). Similarly, also the staff of the spokesperson's unit of the IDF emphasize the importance of the content of the pictures and stories they select to be "appealing" and "relatable" to the target audience (Isr IDF: 63, 119). Moreover, messages are selected that are expected to be perceived by the target audience as something with an added value for itself. The staff of the spokesperson's unit of COGAT ar-

the consequences of the economic actions of the conflict parties, therefore, offers much more pictures and stories fulfilling these criteria for the Israeli side than for the Palestinian side:

1. Pictures and stories highlighting economic attractiveness can credibly signal to the targeted audience a significant potential benefit for itself. Being economically particularly attractive means that Israel can consequently use this attractiveness to produce and disseminate corresponding pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding.[28]
2. Particularly prestigious projects offer pictures and stories featuring something that stands out from the average and that is particularly prestigious or that is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative. As a consequence of being able to fund more prestigious projects, Israel can also produce and disseminate more of such pictures and stories.
3. The distribution of economic opportunities even gives the Israeli side more opportunities to produce pictures and stories showing encounters with people from the target audience, i.e., pictures and stories with particularly relatable content, than for the Palestinian side, as the Israeli side can afford to invest more in cultural diplomacy.

Consequently, the observable consequences of the conflict parties' economic actions shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure offer many more opportunities

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gues, for example: "I think now it is the trend to give added value to the customer. And if you need to give added value to the customer, you do not push the product in his face. You give him the other information that he can use by using your product. And I think all the media are using that now. We should not just say COGAT, COGAT, COGAT. We need to say COGAT but also say that we are proud of something else. We are referring to another situation" (Isr COGAT: 8; cf. also the similar argumentation in Avraham 2009: 210). A focus on superlatives and the extraordinary can be observed in the social media work of the conflict parties, too. The Israeli Government Press Office, for instance, gives as an example of a particularly interesting story the story of an Israeli who was the oldest man alive in the world and additionally also a Holocaust survivor: "So for instance, the oldest man alive today in the world is called Yisrael Kristal. He lives in Haifa. That's north of Israel. He was born in September 1903, and what's super interesting in him, it's not just the fact that he's Israeli, but it's the fact that he's a Holocaust survivor from Auschwitz, and even has his number tattooed on his hand. So, this is an example of a story that we would be very interested in spreading out. We feel it sends very strong message and it's interesting. It's human, humane story, and that's something that we as I said a good example of what we would put forward, even though it's not hardcore news. I can give many other examples, but it's not difficult to just open our Facebook page and see for yourself what kind of topics we are doing" (Isr GPO1: 65f.).

28 Journalists and practitioners have observed that it is particularly attractive for the Israeli side to showcase its economic strength in its external communication, too (cf. e.g. Jerusalem Post 22.04.2017; Jerusalem Post 14.01.2018; Landman 2010: 58).

to produce and disseminate pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding in the case of the Israeli side rather than for the Palestinian side. Therefore, the Israeli side has much better opportunities to present for the use of branding than the Palestinian side.

7.4.2 Detailed examples

While section 7.4.1. has already demonstrated the general presence of the theoretical pattern that the distribution of economic & financial capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present by influencing the economic behavior of the conflict parties, the following section explores this pattern in different fields in greater detail, showing that the observed pattern is not only a one-off occurrence and in this way provides validity to the empirical analysis (cf. also Starke 2015: 476; Bennett & Checkel 2014: 21).

Investments in research and technology

Having a lot of economic & financial capabilities allows the Israeli side, in comparison to the Palestinian side, to invest much more in research and technology. Consequently, only the Israeli side has many pictures and stories about spectacular and innovative outcomes of such research, a type of pictures and stories which is particularly promising for branding:

Possessing a lot of economic & financial capabilities makes it possible for the Israeli side to invest heavily in research and technology. On the one hand, the financially strong private industry in Israel invests a lot in research and the development of new products and services (also driven by the capitalist self-interest to be with these innovative products and services competitive on the world market).[29] On the other hand, also the government is able to fund a comprehensive university infrastructure and in this way create additional research capacities.[30] The government investments in research also include prestigious projects such as their own space program.[31] Furthermore, the government has been able to boost its private sector with subventions and other forms of support for the private industry, further encouraging innovation. Especially the ICT sector and the biotechnology sector, i.e., sectors in which innovation plays a particularly central role, have profited from

29 Indeed, Israeli companies are highly successful in introducing new products and services. Notably, no other countries besides the US and China have listed more companies on the NASDAQ (Forbes 26.12.2018).

30 According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs well over half of the research and development activities in Israel are supported by public funding (Israeli MFA 2013b).

31 Recently the Israel Space Agency even funded a mission sending a spacecraft to the moon (ISA 21.02.2019).

this support.[32] Additionally, Israel has also been able to invest heavily in researching military technology. In this context, technologies that can be used for civilian purposes have been discovered as a side-product as well (cf. e.g. ECORYS 2012: 47, 56).

All of these investments make a research and development infrastructure possible which constantly comes up with numerous innovations[33] that are perceived to be useful for people's lives (or, if not useful, at least spectacular and/or interesting).[34] In particular, Israel can boast achievements in fields that are trending and that are perceived to be particularly important for the future, such as innovations related to sustainability (Landman 2010: 58)[35] or digitalization. For example, the Israeli industry has developed leading cybersecurity technologies and technologies making the use of solar energy more efficient (Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry 2018; Inc. 14.05.2018), contributes strongly to research on automated driving (Inc. 14.05.2018) and the Israeli agricultural industry is famous for its water-saving irrigation systems (Huffington Post 01.12.2016). Altogether, therefore, these spectacular and useful innovations resulting from Israel's investments offer very promising pictures and stories for branding posts (Isr GPO1: 35; Isr IDF: 19f.; Molad 2012: 32). The Palestinian side, in contrast, having only few economic & financial capabilities, cannot afford that many investments in research and technology and, consequently, has also much fewer corresponding opportunities to present.

Investments in cultural attractiveness and cultural diplomacy

Having a lot of economic & financial capabilities allows the Israeli side in comparison to the Palestinian side to invest much more in cultural prestige projects and cultural diplomacy. Consequently, only for the Israeli side, there are many pictures and stories about such spectacular prestige projects and exchanges, a type of pictures and stories which is particularly promising for branding, available:

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32 An example for being able to leverage financing from foreign corporations and institutions by providing government funding and guarantees is the creation of the YOZMA group in 1993, which could attract plenty of venture capital and strongly boost the Israeli private sector, especially also the ICT sector, and foster this way the development of innovations (OECD 2003: 5).

33 As an indicator of the quantity of Israeli innovations the number of patents can be used. Israel is fifth amongst all countries in the world for patents filed per capita (Jerusalem Post 29.08.2018).

34 The various achievements are proudly presented in promotional material of the government (e.g. Israeli Innovation Authority s.a.) but are also picked up as a topic by the Israeli media (e.g. ISRAEL21c 22.04.2012) and foreign business blogs and media (e.g. Fast Company Magazine 13.02.2014).

35 Recently, Israel additionally established a new technological innovation lab specializing in environmental protection and sustainability, supported with 14 million NIS of government funds (Israeli Innovation Authority 11.02.2019).

Israel's high amount of economic & financial capabilities allows the Israeli side to invest strongly in order to increase its cultural attractiveness. Having more capabilities makes it, for example, possible for the Israeli side to spend a lot of money on spectacular events and festivities. For the festivities for the 70th anniversary of the State of Israel in 2018, the Israeli government spent e.g. in total about 100 million NIS (about 30 million USD) (Times of Israel 15.01.2018). Furthermore, Israel's wealth makes it possible to finance prestigious architecture projects such as the modern skyline of Tel Aviv.[36] Generous public funding and private donations, furthermore, make it possible to fund plenty of museums, arts programs and archeological projects.[37] This infrastructure for culture and arts does not only support local artists but also attracts famous international artists.[38] Offering prestige, spectacularity and/or cultural attractiveness, all of these investments in culture offer the Israeli side excellent subjects for branding in its external communication. Its many economic & financial capabilities, however, do not only allow Israel to invest in domestic projects but also to invest in international initiatives. The Israeli government invests heavily in cultural diplomacy and exchange programs (cf. e.g. Schneider 2014; cf. also Appel et al. 2008). While the representations abroad of the PLO & the PNA, for the most part, cannot afford even a single position focusing exclusively on cultural diplomacy,[39] the Israeli embassies tend to have a much higher budget and, therefore, can often even afford to fund entire departments focusing exclusively on cultural diplomacy.[40] These cultural diplomacy activities and exchanges are another source for pictures and stories that are particularly promising

36 Additionally, further prestigious building projects are still under construction (ISRAEL21c 02.07.2018).

37 Cf. e.g. the overview on the website of the Israeli MFA: https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/2004/Pages/Our%20Bookmarks.aspx (accessed: 10.07.2019) (sections on "Archeology in Israel" and "Culture and the Arts"). Recently also the Israeli film industry could celebrate some successes. Series such as "Fauda", for instance, have become globally popular on streaming platforms such as Netflix (Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry s.a.). Though the financial public support for the film industry is only moderate in Israel in comparison to other countries (Hadassah Magazine 04/2018), the support is still better than in Palestine, where it has become even difficult to fund and maintain a basic cinema infrastructure (Yassin 2010).

38 In 2017, for example, the Israel Museum could host an exhibition of the famous Chinese artist Ai Weiwei (Times of Israel 02.06.2017).

39 Cultural diplomacy can be understood as a form of public diplomacy (i.e., external communication directed to audiences beyond diplomats and policy-makers) including the exchange of one or different aspects of arts and culture (cf. also Appel et al. 2008: 7).

40 Cf. the references on the websites of the diplomatic missions. Even Israeli missions to smaller countries such as the embassy in Slovakia have typically their own department for cultural affairs (in addition to a public affairs & press and an academic affairs department) (Israeli Missions in Slovakia 2019). Besides embassies and consulates, moreover, Israel has additional representations abroad. For example, the Ministry of Tourism has its own offices abroad. For their tourism promotion, these representations produce additional culture-related content

for branding. They offer especially the advantage of not only featuring the Israeli culture but also encounters with the society of the target group, which is likely to make the pictures and stories more relatable.

Investments in sports diplomacy

Having a lot of economic & financial capabilities allows the Israeli side, in comparison to the Palestinian side, to invest much more in sports, sports events and sports diplomacy. Consequently, many pictures and stories about athletic success and prestigious and spectacular sports events, a type of pictures and stories particularly promising for branding, are available only for the Israeli side:

Besides culture and arts, sports are a field that also offers the potential to attract a lot of international attention and prestige (Trunkos & Heere 2017). Especially athletic success and hosting international sports competitions provide very promising pictures and stories for branding. Both, however, require economic & financial capabilities as funding. Having only few economic & financial capabilities, the training facilities in the Palestinian Territories are poor and the sports club system is underdeveloped (Times of Israel 04.07.2012). Israel, in contrast, can afford to build and maintain modern sports facilities providing good training conditions. The financial support for sports clubs and athletes is better on the Israeli side, too. Besides private donors, the Israeli government also provides financial support for sports clubs and athletes (Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sports s.a.). Furthermore, in the past, the lack of recognition as a state (i.e., having less social/institutional capabilities) made it difficult for the Palestinian side to participate in international sports events. Palestine only was recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a nation for Olympic purposes in 1993. It was only going forward from then that Palestinian athletes were able to compete at the Olympic games (Horne & Whannel 2012: 122; Khalidi & Raab 2017). In conclusion, these conditions provide much better chances for athletic success for the Israeli side and, consequently, also more opportunities to highlight this success in one's external communication. Indeed, Israeli athletes could win a total of nine medals at Olympic games to date, while the Palestinian side is still waiting for its first medal (Nevill-Manning 23.02.2018). Especially the Israeli judo team could achieve internationally celebrated successes (Haaretz 17.08.2016; Times of Israel 29.10.2018). Scholars writing about sports diplomacy have pointed out, furthermore, that also hosting sports events can be used to improve the image of a nation (cf. e.g. Dart 2016). Again, however, hosting sports events requires sufficient economic & financial capabilities for the organization and providing adequate venues. Having enough capabilities, the

that can be used by other branches of the Israeli government as well (Jewish Virtual Library s.a.).

Israeli side has been able to afford to host a series of major sports events, producing pictures and stories that are of international interest and, therefore, promising for branding. Israel, for example, has hosted a series of international marathons, the UEFA's Men's U-21 tournament in 2013 (Dart 2016), co-hosted the European Basketball Championship in 2017 and Israeli teams have participated in European top competitions such as the UEFA Champions League or the FIBA Basketball EuroLeague.[41] In contrast, for the Palestinian side having much fewer capabilities, it is much more difficult for them to host sports events of this size.

Investments in humanitarian & development aid

Having a lot of economic & financial capabilities allows the Israeli side in comparison to the Palestinian side to invest much more in humanitarian and development aid. Consequently, for the Israeli side pictures and stories about even more and bigger aid projects are available. This allows the Israeli side better to present itself as generous, which is particularly promising for branding:

Offering humanitarian and development aid provides good pictures and stories for branding (cf. e.g. Miller 2011; Tüney 2016). The conflict parties can present themselves as generous and caring, gaining empathy in this way. The more aid they can donate, the more generous they can present themselves. Therefore, again whether and how many particularly promising pictures and stories a conflict party can use relies on how many economic & financial capabilities it can invest. Whilst recently, in 2016, the PNA established a small Palestinian development aid and cooperation agency, the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA), (Al Arqan & Abukhater 2018; PICA 2016), concerning its budget, the PICA can hardly compete with the Israeli development aid and cooperation agency Mashav. In 2013, the expenditures of the Israeli government for Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounted to as much as 201.87 million US dollars (Hadas-Handelsman 2015: 63). A particularly promising way for improving a countries image internationally is to provide first response aid in areas hit by a disaster (Miller 2011). This type of aid and rescue, however, is also very expensive. It typically requires e.g. highly professional logistics, a highly developed medical infrastructure, well-trained staff and high-tech equipment. While the Palestinian side cannot afford this infrastructure, the Israeli side can afford to fund this infrastructure and regularly conducts first response aid and rescue missions in other countries and uses the resulting pictures and stories prominently for its external communication. To name a few examples,

41 For an overview of sports events hosted in Israel cf. e.g. Tourist Israel 2019; Israel Ministry of Tourism 2019.

Israel conducted aid and rescue missions to Haiti in 2010,[42] Japan in 2011,[43] the Philippines in 2013,[44] Nepal in 2015[45] and Mexico in 2017,[46] providing help to these countries after they were hit by natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons (Israeli MFA 2013c). Furthermore, Israel also invested, despite the hostilities with the corresponding countries, in humanitarian aid for Syrians and Palestinians, creating pictures and stories offering Israel the opportunity to present itself as an actor with goodwill. Again, while offering promising pictures and stories, the support required financial means: In 2013, Israel invested 11.26 million US dollars in supplying medical support to Syrians (Hadas-Handelsman 2015: 62).

Resources for media production

Having more economic & financial capabilities allows Israel not only to invest more in prestigious projects than the Palestinian side, but it allows Israel to invest more in the production of media content for its external communication than the Palestinian conflict parties as well. This way Israel can increase the quality of promotional posts on its channels better than the Palestinian conflict parties:

High-gloss advertisements help present a product from its best side.[47] Similarly, as the goal of branding is to present the best sides of an actor, producing and publishing high-gloss, high-quality media content is an asset for presenting a conflict party's strengths in the best light. Producing one's own high-gloss, high-quality media content, however, is quite expensive. Having a lot of economic & financial capabilities, Israel, however, in contrast to the Palestinian side, has the opportunity to produce such professional high-gloss media content. While many branches on the Palestinian side cannot even afford a full-time position dedicated

42 Cf. e.g. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on their English-speaking YouTube channel (18.01.2010) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzOAwIMcErg) (source accessed on: 28.03.2018).

43 Cf. e.g. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on their English-speaking YouTube channel (05.04.2011) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPwIRYspJQc) (source accessed on: 28.03.2018).

44 Cf. e.g. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on their English-speaking YouTube channel (24.11.2013) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eazGylOj2Ec) (source accessed on: 28.03.2018).

45 Cf. e.g. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on their English-speaking YouTube channel (27.04.2015) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k47D7Fge5Wk&list=PLObnKQho808MgBHWiMg3JRJUpHNk9hdyG) (source accessed on: 28.03.2018).

46 Cf. e.g. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on their English-speaking YouTube channel (25.09.2017) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh07yLeJFJg) (source accessed on: 28.03.2018).

47 Hampel et al. (2012) e.g. have shown that advertisements that have been produced with a premium-printing technology are perceived in comparison to conventional advertisements by potential customers as more unique and prestigious, improve the attitude of the customers toward the brand and increase the willingness to buy and recommend the advertised product. In contrast, Aaker & Biel argue that low-quality advertisements tend to raise among potential customers doubts about the quality of the product (Aaker & Biel 2013: 152).

exclusively to media work and it is confronted with a lack of resources for its external communication (PLO MA: 97, 133, 137, 189; Pal UK: 72ff., 407; Pal UN: 53), most branches on the Israeli side can afford entire departments and partially even own experts for videography (e.g. Isr IDF: 85, 89ff.). The Palestinian side, in contrast, often relies on re-sharing content produced by other sources such as newspapers or Pro-Palestinian online blogs and thus cannot offer as much high-gloss content as the Israeli side. While the ability to produce high-gloss content gives the Israeli side better opportunities for using branding, in other contexts, especially contexts relevant for shaming, less professionally appearing content occasionally is perceived as more authentic (giving the posts some "street credibility").[48] Furthermore, war is typically not expected to be a classically aesthetical environment and shakiness can make pictures from war events even more dramatic.

7.5 Opportunities to present – The impact of the distribution of social/institutional capabilities

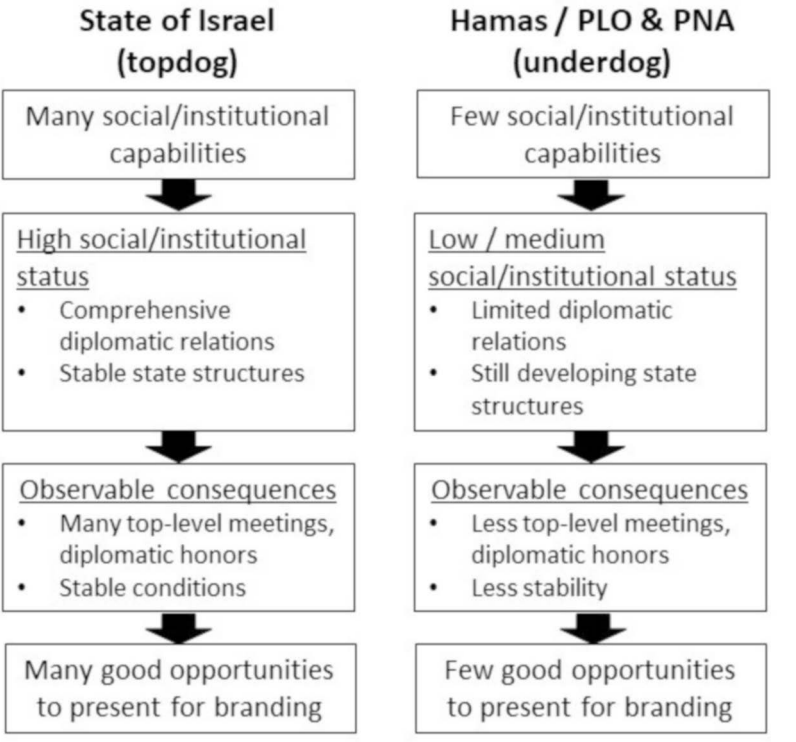
Like the distribution of military and economic & financial capabilities the distribution of social/institutional capabilities also shapes divergent opportunities to present for the different conflict parties (cf. visual overview in figure 27):

The distribution of social/institutional capabilities influences how well developed the diplomatic relations of the conflict parties are and reflects how well developed the statehoods of the conflict parties are. How high the social/institutional status of a conflict party gets is also visible for third-party audiences: Israel, the topdog, having a higher status, participates in more international top-level meetings and has more stable and developed state structures than the Palestinian side. Both top-level international cooperation and being a stable, reliable partner offer very promising pictures and stories for branding. Consequently, Israel has much better opportunities to present for the use of branding.

Section 7.5.1. illustrates the general pattern of how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present of the conflict parties for the conflict in Israel and Palestine. Following the methodological requirements of pattern-matching for theory-testing, section 7.5.2. then, additionally, elaborates on how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities influ-

48 The journalist David Kenner, for example, discussing the role of the social media platform YouTube in modern conflicts, argues that „urgent, jittery videos, punctuated by gunshots, shouts, and moments of breathtaking horror" are "difficult to forget" (Foreign Policy 20.03.2011). The jittery character makes the pictures appearing even more realistic and dramatic. In the conflict in Israel and Palestine, furthermore, when reporting about the conflict, the conflict parties partially have mimicked the look of video games, as e.g. Fruzsina Eördögh has observed, writing for the Slate Magazine (Slate Magazine 16.11.2012).

Figure 27: Overview – How the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes the opportunities to present of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine



ences the diplomatic relations of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine and this, in turn, the opportunities to present of the conflict parties. Similarly, section 7.5.3. explores how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities is reflected in the state and governance structures of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine and how this, in turn, influences the opportunities to present of the conflict parties.

7.5.1 General pattern: How the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present of the conflict parties

The following section illustrates the general pattern of how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present for the conflict parties in the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine: First, it is shown that the distribution of social/institutional capabilities influences how well developed the diplomatic relations of the conflict parties are and reflects how well developed the statehoods of the conflict parties are and that this international status is also visible for third-party audiences in the form of numbers and importance of top-level meetings with foreign officials, as well as the stability of the state structures of the conflict parties. Then, in a second step, it is explained why these observable consequences of the conflict parties' social/institutional status offer very promising pictures and stories for branding and that Israel having the most social/institutional capabilities, consequently, has also the best opportunities to present for the use of branding.

The social/institutional status of the conflict parties and its observable consequences

As is shown in section 4.1.2.3., Israel has much more social/institutional capabilities than the Palestinian conflict parties: On the one hand, having many social/institutional capabilities means that the Israeli side can build up a more comprehensive network of diplomatic relations. Israel, unlike the Palestinian conflict parties, is a full member state of the United Nations. Hamas, in contrast, is designated by wider parts of the Western world as a terrorist organization. While due to its comparatively high recognition, Israel has close relations with all of the most powerful nations, Hamas, lacking international recognition, has only very few relations and the PLO & the PNA, lacking full recognition, do not have yet full diplomatic relations with powerful countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Consequently, it is easier for the Israeli side to organize meetings with high-level representatives and officials of other countries with full diplomatic honors. On the other hand, having many social/institutional capabilities, also means that the Israeli side could develop more stable state structures. While the Palestinian statehood is still incomplete and the Palestinian side struggles with infighting and lacks the ability to exert its monopoly on violence in maximum efficiency, the State of Israel has already developed to a modern state with comparatively efficient governance structures and stable state structures. Consequently, it has the potential to be a reliable and stable partner.

Resulting opportunities to present

What can be observed about the consequences of social/institutional status of the conflict parties constitutes more particularly promising opportunities to present for the use of branding for the Israeli side than for the Palestinian side:

As discussed in section 2.2.2., pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding are (a) pictures or stories that feature something that makes it easy for the target audience to identify itself with the communicating actor (Percy & Rossiter 1992: 271; cf. also Galtung & Ruge 1965: 81 ff.; Luhmann 1996: 60f.; the concept of "brand personality" in marketing research, e.g. Aaker 1997), (b) pictures or stories that credibly signal the target audience a significant potential benefit for itself (cf. also the basic concept of "profit motive" in economic studies, e.g. Lux 2003), and (c) pictures or stories that feature something that stands out from the average and is particularly prestigious or is perceived as particularly admirable, surprising or innovative (cf. also Schultz 2007: 191ff.; e.g. Luhmann 1996: 58f.; Galtung & Ruge 1965: 82f.). As the observations in the last section show, what can be observed of the social/institutional status, consequently, offers much more pictures and stories fulfilling these criteria for the Israeli side than for the Palestinian side:

1. The more high-ranking the representatives and officials are with which a conflict party can meet, the more the pictures or stories from these meetings will stand out from the average and the more prestigious they, therefore, are. As the representatives of the State of Israel have more such meetings with full diplomatic honors than Hamas, the Israeli side can also produce and disseminate more of such prestigious pictures and stories of such meetings.
2. The framing of being able to be a reliable, stable partner can credibly signal to the targeted audience a significant potential benefit for itself. Having this ability, Israel consequently can use this framing to produce and disseminate corresponding pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding.

Consequently, the observable consequences of the social/institutional status of the conflict parties shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure offer much more opportunities to produce and disseminate pictures and stories that are particularly promising for branding in the case of the Israeli side rather than for the Palestinian side. Therefore, the Israeli side has much better opportunities to present for using branding than the Palestinian side.

7.5.2 International cooperation and recognition – Diplomatic & institutional ties

Having illustrated the general pattern of how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present of the conflict parties for the conflict in Israel and Palestine, the following section elaborates on how the distribution of capabilities influences the diplomatic relations of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine more in detail, and how this, in turn, influences the opportunities to present for the conflict parties. Exploring the pattern comprehensively in different dimensions of the conflict is important to show that the observed pattern is not only a one-off occurrence. In this way additional validity is provided to the empirical analysis (cf. also Starke 2015: 476; Bennett & Checkel 2014: 21):

A particularly popular theme for branding are pictures and reports about meetings with leaders and high-ranking officials and representatives of other countries. Such pictures and reports allow one to showcase good international cooperation and closeness to the international community. In particular meetings with famous and high-ranking foreign leaders, officials or representatives from influential and powerful countries can foster this impression. Pictures and reports from such meetings, therefore, offer particularly promising opportunities to present for using branding. The higher the rank and the bigger the influence the better. The access to such opportunities, however, relies on the status of the conflict party, i.e., on how many social/institutional capabilities it has.

Being the recognized government of a (at least among the most influential and powerful nations) fully recognized state gives Israel excellent access to the international diplomatic system, other governments and to international governmental organizations (IGOs). In contrast to the Palestinian actors, Israel can attend meetings of the United Nations and other important IGOs as a full member state (United Nations s.a.). Being fully recognized as a state, at least by all Western states, the visits of Israeli presidents abroad are, following the diplomatic protocol, recognized in the corresponding countries as "state visits". Consequently, Israeli presidents enjoy all ceremonial privileges reserved by the diplomatic protocol for foreign heads of state on their visits abroad.[49] Analogously, Israeli prime ministers enjoy typically the special honors reserved to foreign heads of government on their "official visits". Alone in 2018, for example, the Israeli Premier Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited more than a dozen foreign governments on official visits and in the context of international conferences. His visits included e.g. meetings with the US President (Israeli MFA 05.03.2018), the President of Brazil (Israeli MFA 28.12.2018)

49 Even Egypt, a state that used to be an enemy of Israel, offers since its peace agreement with Israel to Israeli presidents the diplomatic honors it reserves for state visits (Israeli MFA 2013d).

and the Prime Minister of India (Israeli MFA 14.01.2018). All of these visits offered excellent opportunities to generate pictures and stories showcasing Israel's dedication to international cooperation, its value for and contributions to the international community and its reliability as a partner and to emphasize the value of the friendship of Israel with the visited country and, therefore, excellent pictures and stories for branding.[50] Furthermore, being recognized as a state allows Israel to set up embassies and diplomatic missions. Being recognized by all states of the Western world and all veto powers in the UN Security Council means that Israel has, for example, officially recognized embassies in all these particularly powerful and influential states (Israeli MFA 2016). These embassies further facilitate the access to high-ranking decision-makers in the guest countries and, therefore, create even more opportunities for the Israeli side to generate and use pictures that are particularly promising for branding.

Hamas, in contrast, has a very low international status, i.e., very few social/institutional capabilities. Especially within the Western world Hamas is not only not recognized as a legitimate representation of the Palestinian people, but partially even perceived and designated as a terror organization. For example, the United States[51] and the European Union[52] list Hamas as a terror organization. Consequently, Hamas cannot set up official representations in these countries.[53] While some states, especially in the Arab world, have relationships with Hamas, these relations are mostly organized in an informal manner and often are not made public (Chen 2010: 102f.). Despite being a central conflict party, Hamas is often not even invited to peace talks and negotiations (Lanz 2010: 290; Gunning 2004). Consequently, as there are only very few public meetings and official contacts with Hamas at international level, there are hardly any pictures and stories from such meetings and contacts that Hamas could use for its external communication.

As shown in section 4.1.2.3., the PNA and respectively the PLO have a bit more social/institutional capabilities than an ideal-typical underdog in an asymmetric

50 A typical example of this type of branding post is e.g. the following post on the English-speaking Facebook page of the Israeli Prime Minister about a meeting of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the Australian Foreign Minister Judie Bishop: https://www.facebook.com/IsraeliPM/posts/prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-met-today-with-australian-foreign-minister-jul/1404046156276792/ (English-speaking Facebook page of the Prime Minister of Israel, published on: 04.09.206, source accessed on: 10.07.2019).
Press conferences and statements in the context of official visits also are good opportunities to highlight other Israeli strengths of Israel such as its economic attractiveness and its value as a strategic partner, combined with the aspect of international cooperation.

51 US Department of State – Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism 2018.

52 Council of the European Union (27.01.2017): Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/154.

53 Hamas has only official representations in a few countries in the Arab world (Reuters 05.09.2012).

conflict. During the last years, the PLO & the PNA could increase both their status within the international community and their level of international recognition. In the meanwhile, the Palestinian president receives on many of his visits abroad similar diplomatic honors as his Israeli counterpart.[54] Moreover, the PLO & the PNA could set up a series of diplomatic missions abroad. Furthermore, after a long fight, the PLO & the PNA have managed to get access to a series of international institutions and to join a series of international treaties. This gives the PLO & the PNA the opportunity to produce and use pictures and stories about meetings with high-ranking leaders and officials of other important countries, similarly to the Israeli side.[55] As this type of pictures and stories is a popular one for branding posts, it is not surprising that many of the few branding posts on the Palestinian side feature corresponding pictures and stories.

While there are some opportunities for the PLO & the PNA to use this type of pictures and stories, the opportunities are not as good than those of the Israeli side, however, as the PLO & the PNA are confronted with some constraints and limitations: On the one hand, the struggle to gain recognition of Palestinian's statehood remains incomplete. Within the United Nations, the State of Palestine has only the status of a "Non-member State Permanent Observer" so far and, therefore, also not the full rights as a full member (Berzak 2013). Similarly, due to the lack of recognition of the Palestinian statehood, in many states, especially in the Western world, the diplomatic missions of the PLO & the PNA are not granted the status of being "embassies". Recently, the PLO mission to the United States in Washington was even forced by the US government to close down (BBC 10.09.2018; Times of Israel 11.10.2018). On the other hand, the quantity of the Palestinian diplomatic activities is also limited by the high financial costs for these activities. Having only few economic & financial capabilities, the Palestinian budget for hosting events and maintaining diplomatic missions abroad is quite limited,[56] which, in turn, affects the number of events and encounters that can be featured in pictures and stories for branding on the Palestinian channels of external communication. Furthermore, the Palestinian side is confronted with limitations of the mobility of its leaders and officials. They have, to a degree, been affected by restrictions or even travel bans imposed by the Israeli government.[57] Lacking their own airport in service, Palestinian

54 E.g. at the United Nations (Mission of Palestine to Denmark 30.09.2013).

55 In 2018, for example, the Palestinian president spent 109 days abroad and visited 17 other countries, including the US, Russia, France, Ireland, Belgium, Italy, Cuba, Venezuela and Chile, meeting with various heads of government and heads of state (Ynet 10.01.2019).

56 In general, the lack of (financial) resources for diplomacy and social media work is described by the Palestinian practitioners as a core problem (PLO MA: 97, 133, 137, 180; Pal UK: 72, 403; cf. also Ynet 10.01.2019).

57 E.g. President Arafat was banned for some time from traveling by the Israeli government (Independent 28.04.2003).

leaders and officials, thus, rely on foreign transport infrastructure for their official travels.[58]

7.5.3 Governance structures – Stability framing and "shared values"

Having illustrated the general pattern of how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities shapes divergent opportunities to present for the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine, and how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities influences the conflict parties' diplomatic relations and how this, in turn, influences the opportunities to present of the conflict parties, the following section explores more in detail how the distribution of social/institutional capabilities is reflected in the state and governance structures of the conflict parties and how this, in turn, influences the opportunities to present of the conflict parties. Exploring the pattern comprehensively in different dimensions of the conflict is important to show that the observed pattern is not only a one-off occurrence. In this way, additional validity to the empirical analysis is provided (cf. also Starke 2015: 476; Bennett & Checkel 2014: 21):

In section 6.3. it has already been shown that Israel has a lot of social/institutional capabilities, which makes it possible for its allies to frame Israel as an important and reliable (strategic) partner for stability in the region, this is a crucial source to justify their support to Israel as topdog and it is, therefore, in Israel's interest not to undermine this perception. Yet, this framing is not only an effective source of justification for Israel's allies but also a promising theme for branding, as having a potent and stable partner can be sold as added value for the target audience of the external communication.

Indeed, references framing Israel as a reliable (strategic) partner can be found in their external communication, often in combination with references to Israel's comprehensive international cooperation.[59] Being able to frame oneself as a stable and potent partner requires the actual ability to fulfill the core expectations that are typically directed toward sovereign states. These expectations include having an independent and efficient government in particular (cf. criteria from the Montevideo Convention; Zadeh 2012: 22ff.) and the ability to exert the monopoly on violence (Daase 1999: 228ff.). Having a developed and functioning state and governance structure, Israel can fulfill these expectations well: The Israeli government has full authority over the entire Israeli territory and the Israeli population. With

58 While in the meanwhile the PNA could afford to buy an own private jet for the government to facilitate its travels, the jet is not stationed in Palestine but in Amman (Times of Israel 24.01.2018).

59 Cf. e.g. the following example from the English-speaking Twitter channel of the IDF: https ://twitter.com/i/web/status/993746181598646272 (post from 07.05.2018, source accessed on: 10.07.2019).

the help of its well-trained police and military forces, the country can maintain its monopoly on violence domestically and can provide comparatively well security for its citizens. Domestic disputes are settled within the parliamentary system of the country, which is legitimized by regular elections, following clear legal rules.[60]

Profiting from emphasizing conflict and crisis, as has been shown in section 6.1.3., for the Palestinian side using a stability framing would be rather counterproductive. Moreover, also opportunities to use such a framing are rather small: In comparison to Israel, which declared its independence as early as 1948 and, has, therefore, had a long time to develop and realize stable state structures, the state-building process on the Palestinian side started much later. Due to different reasons, including the implications of the Israeli occupation and domestic infighting, it remains difficult for the Palestinian side to set up stable, independent and efficient governance structures that fulfill the expectations which are expected from a modern state: Due to the Israeli occupation and the infighting between Fatah (the major faction in the PLO & the PNA) and Hamas, both the PLO & the PNA and Hamas only have effective authority over comparatively small parts of the territory claimed by them for a potential future Palestinian state. Considering the existence of other independent militias such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the ability of the two major Palestinian factions to exert the monopoly on violence can be considered to be only limited (Fletcher 2008). Due to the disagreement between Fatah and Hamas, no presidential elections have been held since 2005 and no parliamentary elections since 2006, which makes it easy for critics to raise doubts about the legitimacy of the ruling Palestinian institutions (Al-Monitor 23.10.2018).

Like the stability framing references to shared values[61] are not only an efficient source of justification for allies of conflict parties but also a promising theme for branding, as sharing the same values makes it easier for the target audience to identify with the communicating conflict party, an option which is used especially by the Israeli side. Having, in contrast to the Palestinian side, a functioning democratic system and a comparatively high standard of political rights and civil liberties (at least within its actual borders),[62] the Israeli side has a comparative advantage

60 While difficult coalition building, snap elections and cabinet reshuffles are not seldom in Israel, the general political system proved to be stable and the mentioned challenges are types of challenges with which also various other states typically considered to stable have been confronted with, too (Kenig 2008).

61 For a less structuralist discussion of the role of "shared values" within the Israeli external communication cf. also Kohn 2015.

62 Still, the Israeli democracy has some significant deficits. The discrimination of minorities such as the Arab Israelis remains, for example, a serious problem. Nevertheless, the quality of the Israeli democracy still is assessed by observers as comparatively high. Assessing the political rights and civil liberties in different countries, the NGO Freedom House assigns in its Freedom of the World report for 2018 Israel to the highest freedom status "free" and gives Israel in its overall rating 79 out of 100 points, a score only slightly worse than the score

to use pictures and stories referring to (shared) values that are highly appreciated within wide parts of the Western world. E.g. Israel frequently point out its diversity and democratic nature. At least to a certain extent,[63] the ability to maintain a functioning democratic system is linked to the degree of development of the state and governance structures of the conflict parties, as stable state and governance structures facilitate democratic stability (Andersen 2017: 299ff.), which has given the Israeli side better chances to develop such an advantage over the Palestinian side.

7.6 Identifying the most successful strategy by controlling for efficiency

Having explored how the unequal distribution of capabilities shapes both different opportunities to convince and different opportunities to present for the conflict parties in the last sections, the following section examines how the resulting opportunities to convince and present shape the selection of strategies of external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine (cf. overview in figure 28):

As the previous sections have shown, the Palestinian conflict parties, as the underdogs, have much better opportunities for the use of shaming, while Israel, as the topdog, has much better opportunities to use branding (cf. overview in table 11).

As the communicating conflict parties on both sides think and act strategically, it can be expected that they develop their strategies of external communication in a success-oriented way and adapt their external communication to their operational environment and the opportunities provided for the use of different

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of the United States (86 points) (Puddington et al. 2019: 462ff.). Due to the implications of the Israeli occupation, the increasingly authoritarian rule of the PNA in the West Bank and the authoritarian rule of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, in contrast, Freedom House assigns both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the lowest freedom status "not free", awarding only 28 respectively 12 points (Puddington et al. 2019: 1190ff. & 1132ff.).

63 While stable state and governance structures can be considered to be a condition supporting democratic stability, it is not a sufficient condition. For various reasons leaders can decide against democratic actions, even if promising structures exist. Indeed, e.g. some recent legislative initiatives such as the introduction of a Jewish Nation State law have the potential to harm Israel's democracy and therefore also to decrease its ability to use it as a reference for branding and even to provide opportunities for Israel's opponents to shame Israel (cf. also interview with former IDF spokesperson Peter Lerner in Forward 05.08.2018).

64 Having a "victim image" can undermine the credibility of branding by overshadowing the focus on positivity. Therefore, the opportunities to convince for the use of branding of the Palestinian side as underdogs are slightly limited.

Figure 28: Overview – Step of the audience and the picturability pathway discussed in section 7.6. (highlighted in light grey)

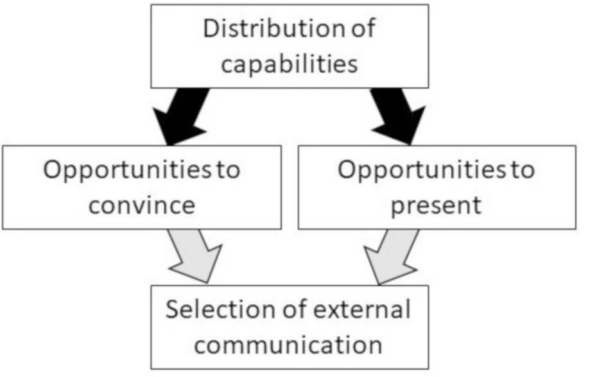

Table 11: Opportunities to use strategies of external communication successfully during the conflict in Israel and Palestine[64]

			Power position	
			Israel (topdog, many capabilities)	PLO & PNA and Hamas (underdogs, few capabilities)
Opportunities to use particular strategies	Type of opp.	Type of strategy		
	Opportunities to convince	with branding	good	slightly limited
		with shaming	limited	very good
	Opportunities to present	with branding	very good	limited
		with shaming	limited	very good
	Opportunities (overall)	with branding	very good	limited
		with shaming	limited	very good

strategies of external communication: The following sections show that all conflict parties, indeed, as predicted theoretically, carefully observe the success of their external communication (section 7.6.1.). While the Israeli side observes that branding works very well for them and shaming less so (section 7.6.2.), the Palestinian side observes that they are particularly successful with shaming (section 7.6.3.). Finally, it can be also shown that the impact of the opportunities to convince and present is not only reflected in the reported experiences of the practitioners of the conflict parties but also in the published external communication messages of the conflict parties (section 7.6.4.).

7.6.1 Controlling the effectiveness of strategies of external communication – Indicators of success

All conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine carefully observe the success of their external communication. As the interviews with officials responsible for the external communication that were conducted for this study show, all branches of the conflict parties that have channels used for external communication also have some form of mechanism for evaluating the impact of their external communication in order to assess whether the strategy of external communication they apply is successful or not. The form of evaluation varies, however, for different organizations (depending also on the budget of the corresponding branches of the conflict parties available for the evaluation): Almost all branches of the Israeli government and the PLO & the PNA that have social media channels used for external communication use the metrics provided by the social media platforms as an indicator for the success of their external communication (Isr COGAT: 60; Isr IDF: 62f. + 122f.; Isr MFA2: 14 + 38; PLO MA: 188 (reporting about all major social media channels from PLO branches); PA UN: 86, 187f., 189-192, 212, 216). The social media teams of some branches, such as, for instance, the spokesperson's unit of COGAT, also use the feedback from comments and direct messages that they receive from their audience to evaluate the success of their external communication (Isr COGAT: 60). Some of the teams and officials in charge of the external communication of the conflict parties additionally also observe the reactions of multiplicators and key stakeholders such as policy-makers (Isr COGAT: 60; Isr IDF: 134-137). Many of the teams and officials do press reviews observing the reporting about the conflict and the sentiment toward the conflict parties in the reports (Isr COGAT: 62; Isr GPO1: 78f.; PLO MA: 190-192), partially using sentiment-detecting software as well (Isr GPO2: 83). Some actors include both their own opinion polling and polls and rankings made by third-party institutions as indicators in their evaluations (Isr MFA2: 14). Furthermore, on commission of the Israeli government studies have also been conducted to develop a promising communication strategy (Ido Aharoni in Knowledge@Wharton 01.03.2012 and 01.05.2015; Haaretz 01.10.2010) and studies of think tanks have provided information about which strategies of external communication are successful and which are not (cf. e.g. The Israel Project 2009; Molad 2012; Jerusalem Post 25.02.2019; Gilboa 2013: 128).

Altogether, the practitioners on both sides conclude from their assessments based on the indicators described above that the types of message content they have selected for their external communication are the most successful ones amongst all the various types of message content available: The Israeli side observes that for them social media posts containing branding work particularly well and posts containing shaming are not as well-received (cf. also section 7.6.2.). The practitioners on the Palestinian side, in contrast, conclude that for them shaming messages are

the most powerful type of message (cf. also section 7.6.3.). As is to be expected from the perspective of the theoretical predictions, the strategies of external communication both parties have selected for the content of their external communication are perceived by them as successful, and both sides conclude from this assessment that it makes sense for them to maintain their existing strategies of external communication, i.e., a branding-dominated strategy on the Israeli side and a shaming-dominated strategy on the Palestinian side.[65]

7.6.2 Experiences of the Israel side: Failure with shaming, success with branding

From their evaluations, the staff in charge of the external communication on the Israeli sides knows that a strategy of external communication based predominantly on shaming does not work particularly well for them (Similarly, based on their experience and evaluations the different Israeli government branches have been able to assess other strategies of external communication, such as defensive strategies focusing on justifications, denials and excuses, as failing strategies as well, which all have been assessed as not very successful[66]). The digital diplomacy team of the

65 While the practitioners and experts on both sides are, based on conclusions from the comparison of the success of different types of messages, satisfied with the selection of the content that is part of their strategies of external communication, they describe also issues that from their point of view still need to be improved: These issues especially encompass organizational issues, such as the need for a better coordination of the staff and actors contributing to the external communication of one's side (cf. e.g. the discussions on the Herzliya Conference in 2010 in the workshops discussing Israel's external communication (Landman 2010: 59, Bar 2010: 75, 76, 79, 81)), and stylistic issues, such as the need to make their own social media work more visual (Landman 2010: 57; Also most of the Israeli media reports that criticize the Israeli external communication rather criticize the style and organization of the external communication of Israel than the content of its external communication). That the interviewees do not omit self-critical points and acknowledge their own weaknesses and shortcomings shows that the assessments on the success of the strategies of external communication summarized in section 7.6. can be considered to be self-critical assessments and that the assessments are not mere sugarcoating of the practitioners for their own work.

66 While shaming is not an attractive option for the Israeli side, most Israeli and Pro-Israeli practitioners and PR and diplomacy experts also agree that a defensive approach based on justifications, denials and excuses only reacting to opponent shaming messages is not an appropriate and promising alternative for Israel either, them being in the role of Goliath. Indeed, after a series of (perceived) PR disasters, including especially the 2000 Al-Dura incident, the 2002 Jenin massacre, the 2006 Lebanon War (cf. also Hassman 2008: 18) and the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, more and more voices recommended to reduce the use of defensive, reactive rhetorics. The old policy of Hasbara (the Hebrew word "hasbara" can be roughly translated as "explaining") was more and more questioned and criticized to be too "limited, defensive and apologetic" (Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2008: 735; Braha in Jerusalem Post 01.01.2015). Since then the goal for the Israeli communication, and in particular in its mass communication

Israeli MFA has noticed, for example, that it is not able to reach out successfully beyond the core group of its supporters if they use a predominantly negative language: "Look, the thing is: When you use sorts of content that are more negative in their language or aggressive […], you get much more inside-the-camp support and listening and much less outside-the-camp support and listening" (Isr MFA2: 21). A member of the Israeli Government Press Office even argues that negative stories are risky for Israel, as they "can come back like a boomerang" (Isr GPO2: 50) and reports that the GPO, therefore, tries to avoid negative stories.

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aiming to reach out to audiences abroad, has been to become less reactive and more proactive and to move from a purely tactical, short-term approach to a comprehensive, long-term strategic approach (Kretschmer 2017: 8; Shenhav et al. 2010: 147; Braha in Jerusalem Post 01.01.2015). As a member of the digital diplomacy team of the Israeli MFA reports, this shift is reflected also in the terminology used by the practitioners. Referring to the Division for Media and Hasbara, to which the Digital Diplomacy Department belongs, he reports: "Okay, so in our name we have hasbara, but [we] really, really do not like this word because it takes you out on the defensive. Hasbara [= 'explain'] for what? We have the legitimacy to talk, to tell people about what we think. So, we call it 'Public Diplomacy'" (Isr MFA2: 57). From this perspective focusing on justifications would be counter-productive, as by reacting to opponent claims and accusations also additional attention for the opponent's position is generated. This way the opponent can define the focus of the discussion, while the justifying actor can do damage control in the best case. Dan Illouz, a member of the Jerusalem City Council with the Hitorerut movement party, therefore, prefers a strategy in which Israel actively shapes the story about the conflict abroad and not only relies on reactive measures such as justifications: "Much of Israel's current public diplomacy is focused on answering the accusations of others. Israel focuses on explaining why we are not an apartheid state, war criminals, or an occupying force. However, by making these arguments, we are letting our enemies decide what the framing of the discussion is. Many times, the framing of the discussion is even more important than the discussion itself. If the question is always 'Is Israel an Apartheid state?', then we are losing the battle before even starting it! We need to pro-actively change the question and make it: 'Is Israel a symbol of liberty?', 'Is Israel a symbol of historical justice?', 'Is Israel a symbol of Hope?'. By taking control over the framing of the argument, by being proactive instead of defensive, we will be able to completely change the rules of the game thus winning the public diplomacy battle" (Times of Israel 23.07.2013). A very similar assessment and similar conclusions were also formulated by a working group of Israeli government officials, practitioners from NGOs and academic experts on the 2010 Herzliya Conference: "Israel is in large measure responsible for its own negative international perception. When it has to speak to the world, it communicates its position exclusively vis-à-vis the conflict. This approach, namely the Hasbarah paradigm, which explains or, perhaps more accurately, attempts to explain the conflict – embodies the view that it can build a relation between Israel and the rest of the world by making cold clinical, historical, factual statements. This paradigm has largely failed. In most countries, the majority of public opinion is not interested in what Israel has to say about the conflict. Israel needs to restore – rather than create – its relevance in the world, and it should do so by communicating its successes and advantages. Israel is a great 'product' in a variety of ways" (Landman 2010: 58).

In contrast, when experimenting with different forms and types of messages, the practitioners in charge of the Israeli external communication have observed that using positive communication (i.e., "branding") has proved to be a particularly successful communication strategy, achieving a particularly high reach-out. In particular, using branding has helped reach out beyond their core group of supporters, functioning as a kind of "door-opener" to these new audiences:

A spokesperson of the IDF, for example, assesses positive messages to be more appealing and relatable for unaffiliated audiences: "But then I think the target audience is also something that needs to be reflected. And I don't necessarily want to reach my core audience. The core audience is the core Israel supporters. I don't necessarily want to reach them. I want to actually reach people beyond that. So, a more positive message is more appealing to them anyway. We're more relatable" (Isr IDF: 54). He also has experienced that this kind of messages is more successful with reaching out beyond the core group of Israel's supporters in his practical work: "Yes. Well two years ago I wanted to reach beyond the core audience. And what we did is, we emphasized the softer sides of things. So that people would be able to identify and relate to the less soft stuff. To the softer stuff, to the things that tell more about Israeli society like women service, like LGBT, like minorities, like technology." (Isr IDF: 61). For him these positive messages work as "eye openers, things that can give people a broader view, broader perspective about the IDF and Israel through that keyhole" (Isr IDF: 43).

The spokesperson's unit of COGAT has experienced, too, that with the use of branding they can successfully reach out to new audiences. They have observed that, if they use stories in their posts that are actually very simple but positive, that these posts perform particularly well. These stories have the advantage of portraying Israel in a context where Israel is not framed as a combating actor but as a benefactor and, according to the observations from COGAT, there is a demand for such posts. To illustrate this assessment the spokesperson's unit of COGAT uses the example of their reporting on COGAT's coordination of the export of strawberries from the Gaza Strip, which has been framed as humanitarian support for the Palestinian population,[67] and which has proved to be very successful: "E.g. posts about strawberries from Gaza attract every year a lot of attention. Our followers around the world all react to that and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs call us and say it is a good item. And it is also only about strawberries. So, it is amazing. But people want to see that things are going on. If you see our website, you see that under the big picture the number of trucks and people who are passing the border every day. Why? Because the international community wants to see that there is

67 An example for this type of social media post can be found here: https://twitter.com/cogat_israel/status/805452900780621824 (English-speaking Twitter channel of COGAT, post published on: 04.12.2016, accessed on: 05.12.2018); cf. also Israeli MFA 28.11.2010.

a dynamic all the time. I do not think it is reflected very well by the media. I do not think that they are aware of it. I can say that IDF is using our information, too. Before my time, two years ago we did not have any Facebook. So, IDF took these materials and used them. Now, as we have our own Facebook channels, we are publishing that. But our connection is still very good. So, we contribute to each other's social media work" (Isr COGAT: 13).

Similar observations have also been made by the Israeli MFA. As quoted previously, they have observed that negative and aggressive language results, for them, only in creating inside-the-camp support but hardly achieves creating any support beyond their own camp. Positive communication, according to their observations, in contrast, allows them to reach out successfully beyond their own camp: "So, if we are trying to bridge that, if we are trying to not talk to – to preach to the choir, as they say – and we are trying to reach other audiences, make them open up to our ideas, then this is the, I think, reasonable way to do, go, which makes more sense" (Isr MFA2: 21). Whilst arguing that there are some exceptions that need to be mentioned but that cannot be framed in a positive way, in general, positivity is the preferred strategy for the Israeli MFA for its external communication, as it is perceived to be more effective: "So, we are trying to differentiate between the more political and the less political. But, also, [when] we are talking about political issues on the 'IsraelMFA'-channel, I think, it will be fair to say that we are trying to use a more positive language. We try to use less accusations, although when we are talking about Iran, there is no place for being appeasing or to [be] nice about it. There is no way to be nice about it. But, basically, our spirit is, [our] basic guiding line is to talk more positively about things because people psychologically will connect better to positivity than to negativity. Again, I am saying it with this little remark that sometimes there is no way not to be negative about things. It is a very general term. But we are trying to be more positive with our comments. Again, this brings me back to the issue of the fact that we are trying to [reach out to] people that sometimes do not know us. So, if you come across forceful, negative, not-inviting content, this might not work with this kind of people. So, we find it to be more effective, in general, to talk about things in a more positive way" (Isr MFA2: 19).

These observations made during the practical experience of the practitioners in their everyday work comply with the results of the studies conducted on commission of the Israeli government and different think tanks, too: The Brand Israel Project, a project that aimed to identify and test a successful brand identity for Israel, for example, identified a series of Israeli strengths such as the popularity of its high-tech products (Ynet 09.04.2009; Haaretz 03.06.2017; Toledano & McKie 2013: 170f.; Aharoni & Grinstein 2017) and recommended focusing more on Israel's "creative energy" in the Israeli external communication (Aharoni 21.07.2010; Haaretz 01.10.2010; cf. also Ofek & Gulick 2018/19; eTN News 03.06.2014). The project was supported by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and accompanied and con-

sulted by professional media agencies and pro-Israeli NGOs (Commentary Magazine 10/2009; ISRAEL21c 20.01.2005; Reut Institute 2010: 55; Pappé 2017; Moment Magazine 2008; Mondoweiss 30.11.2011; Electronic Intifada 23.02.2010[68]). The recommendations were based on the results of comprehensive research including focus group studies and surveys (Forward 14.10.2005; Griffin 2013: 26ff., 62ff.; Haaretz 03.06.2017). Moreover, a series of studies from think tanks, which have also been reviewed by the Israeli practitioners, came to very similar results and recommendations. For example, "The Israel Project's 2009 GLOBAL LANGUAGE DICTIONARY", a study composed by the conservative US pollster and strategist Frank Luntz and that was published by the pro-Israeli think tank "The Israel Project", has strongly influenced the Israeli public diplomacy (Independent 27.07.2014). The study is based on comprehensive opinion polling and recommends using more positive language and avoiding referring to certain conflict-related issues (The Israel Project 2009). Similarly, studies of the Israeli center-left think tank Molad (Molad 2012) and Vibe Israel, a private non-profit enterprise claiming to be dedicated to the mission to "enhance Israel's global reputation" (Vibe Israel 2019; Jerusalem Post 25.02.2019), recommend Israel to focus on positive aspects (for other examples cf. also Gilboa 2006: 741).

7.6.3 Experiences of the Palestinian side: Success with shaming

The practitioners on the Palestinian side, in contrast, conclude that for them shaming messages are the most powerful type of message (Other strategies of external communication, in contrast, have proofed not to be very successful or even counterproductive from a long-term perspective[69]). Based on the indicators they have to evaluate the success of their external communication as described in section 7.6.1.,

68 Some of the sources quoted here are strongly partisan. However, all the sources despite their diverse partisan backgrounds provide similar information. Thus, the corresponding information provided by the sources is likely to be credible.

69 The recent shaming-dominated strategy of the Palestinian conflict parties with a peaceful rhetoric toward Western audiences has not been the first strategy of external communication that has been tried out by Palestinian conflict parties. During its early days, the focus within the messages of the PLO and the then still only loosely associated Palestinian factions was still different, also for messages directed to audiences abroad. After 1967 and until the early 1970s militant Palestinian groups attracted most of the attention they received internationally with acts of international terrorism, accompanied by an aggressive rhetoric. While such a media and combat strategy fulfilled the political purpose of generating attention for the Palestinian cause, from a long-term perspective alienating foreign audiences with a threatening rhetoric proved to be counterproductive. Consequently, the PLO leadership promoted a shift within the military strategy as well as concerning the rhetoric. The PLO and the different Palestinian militant groups ceased their terrorist activities at least at the international level and adopted a more moderate rhetoric, focusing on shaming (Gilmour 2016). Cf. also

most of the social media staff on the Palestinian side are convinced that referring to the conflict and using a strategy of external communication that is dominated by shaming is the best possible strategy of external communication to choose for them, as the following statement of a media advisor of the PLO, for example, illustrates: "So, I think when you confront this basic reality, especially when you communicate it abroad because a lot of people don't have the opportunity to come to Palestine. [~~Their question …~~] They stand in front a very dark reality. And so, our message will always be stronger than the Israeli message. Our narrative will always be stronger than the Israeli narrative" (PLO MA: 100f.). The claim of efficiency of shaming as the dominant Palestinian strategy of external communication is, last but not least, supported by the assessments and reactions of their Israeli opponents, which have characterized the Palestinian and Pro-Palestinian efforts of external communication as a serious threat for the image and reputation of the State of Israel. Also, when comparing the Palestinian shaming-dominated strategy to the Israeli branding-dominated strategy, the Palestinian practitioners are confident. A PLO media advisor, for example, assesses: "So, I think the message, our message, is much stronger" (PLO MA: 96). Even practitioners and experts on the opponent's, i.e., the Israeli, side acknowledge the powerfulness of the Palestinian shaming messages (cf. also section 7.1.2.).

7.6.4 The selection of branding or shaming

Finally, the impact of the opportunities to convince and present is not only reflected in the reported experiences of the practitioners of the conflict parties but also in the published external communication messages of the conflict parties. Fitting to the opportunities provided by the conflict structure, chapter 5 has already shown that, indeed, the external communication of the channels of the Israeli government branches engaging in external communication is dominated by branding and that the channels of the branches of Hamas and the PLO & the PNA are dominated, in contrast, by shaming. Additionally, besides this general trend, however, it can be observed that the more specific characteristics of the branding and shaming messages in the external communication of the conflict parties match well with the specific opportunities provided to them by the conflict structure. The conflict parties predominantly choose strong branding and shaming themes in particular, for which the conflict structure provides pictures and stories for them. In contrast, they cannot use themes for which for them no pictures and stories are available, and they do not use a lot of pictures and stories that do not represent a strong branding or shaming theme:

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the chapter A.1.5. "Adaptations of the Palestinian offensive combat tactics and external communication strategies during the process of establishment" in the online annex.

Opportunities to convince

As shown in section 7.1., the underdog/topdog effect makes it easier for the Palestinian side, as the underdogs, to gain empathy when referring to the conflict than for the Israeli side, as the topdog, and it is more difficult for the Israeli side to present itself as a victim than for the Palestinian side. When the acts of violence of both sides are compared, referring to the conflict and shaming, for which the conflict offers the most promising reference themes (cf. section 2.2.1.), is much less promising as a strategy of external communication for the Israeli side than for the Palestinian side. As the analysis of the strategies of external communication in chapter 5 shows, the conflict parties, indeed, use strategies of external communication adapted to these opportunities:

The Palestinian conflict parties, having more opportunities to convince with shaming, predominantly use shaming in their external communication. The Israeli side, in contrast, uses much less shaming. References to the conflict are very frequent on the Palestinian side, while the Israeli side refers comparatively seldom to the conflict. Even if the Israeli side refers to the conflict and uses shaming, this shaming is typically exclusively directed against Palestinian combatants and not against Palestine and its population as a whole. Even more notably, chapter 5 has also shown that a comparatively high share of the shaming posts on the Israeli side does not refer to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian conflict parties at all, but to the tensions of Israel with Iran instead. This observation fits well to the assumption of a strong impact of the underdog/topdog effect on the selection of strategies of external communication, too: Unlike the Palestinian conflict parties, Iran as a recognized state with considerable military power in comparison to Israel is not an underdog (or at least not as clearly). Therefore, the underdog/topdog effect does not apply for this relation, making it less problematic for Israel to use shaming in this relationship than for the relationship with the Palestinian conflict parties. The international interest in the conflict between Israel and Iran, however, is traditionally much lower than the interest in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian conflict parties. Therefore, attempts to shift away the attention from the latter to the former are difficult and focusing on shaming Iran is only of limited use as an alternative to branding as a strategy of external communication for the Israeli side as topdog.

Opportunities to present

Besides the impact of the opportunities to convince, the impact of the opportunities to present can be observed in the general and specific structure of the external communication messages of the conflict parties. That the external communication on the Israeli side is dominated by branding whilst the external communication of the Palestinian conflict parties is strongly dominated by shaming fits well to the

observation that the Israeli side has many promising opportunities to present for using branding but only few opportunities to present for using shaming, whilst the Palestinian conflict parties have many promising opportunities to present for using shaming but only few opportunities to present for using branding. Yet, not only this general trend can be observed. It can also be observed that, as the results of the analysis identifying the strategies of external communication of the conflict parties in chapter 5 show, the conflict parties use exactly those reference themes for their shaming and branding that have been identified as particularly promising themes (sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.) and for which the conflict structure offers them the most pictures and stories (sections 7.2.-7.5.):

The Israeli side, for example, having the corresponding opportunities to present (cf. sections 7.4. and 7.5.), reports a lot about technological innovation, huge but expensive cultural and sports events and international cooperation, presenting itself as a stable, reliable and democratic partner and, in this way, uses the corresponding particularly good opportunities to present the asymmetric conflict structure offers Israel for its external communication. Shaming, in contrast, is used much less than on the Palestinian side, fitting to the observation that the Israeli side has much less particularly promising opportunities to present to use shaming (cf. section 7.3.). In the few cases in which shaming is used, however, only strong pictures and stories are used. According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz the IDF, for example, has decided to report only on violent incidents, if they are spectacular and "shocking" enough to be used for shaming, and has created internal documents to decide about which incidents should be reported (Haaretz 16.09.2013). As not that many corresponding pictures and stories are available for the Israeli side, shaming is used on the Israeli channels comparatively seldomly.

The Palestinian side, having many corresponding opportunities (cf. section 7.3.), in contrast, uses shaming a lot. Having the corresponding opportunities to present, for example, it reports a lot on the implications of the occupation for its civil population and more than Israel about (civilian) fatalities and, in this way uses the corresponding particularly promising opportunities to present the asymmetric conflict structure offers the Palestinian side. In contrast, as only few corresponding pictures and stories are available for the Palestinian side (cf. sections 7.4. and 7.5.), the Palestinian conflict parties hardly report, in contrast to the Israeli side, on issues such as technological innovation, major cultural and sports events, international cooperation and democracy and diversity.

8. Empirics II – Crisis communication and alternative explanations

Chapter 5 has shown that in the conflict in Israel and Palestine the external communication of the Palestinian side is continuously dominated by shaming, while, in contrast, the external communication of the Israeli side is mostly dominated by branding. Only during a few short periods, the Israeli external communication is dominated by shaming, too. It could then be shown in chapters 6 and 7 that this distribution of external communication strategies is shaped by the interests and opportunities of the conflict parties, which are shaped by the conflict structure of the asymmetric conflict. The evidence from this analysis supports the theoretical model presented in chapter 3, that assumes that the conflict structure shapes the selection of strategies of external communication, as matching empirical patterns could be found for all theoretical patterns of the theoretical model. In section 3.5., however, a series of limitations and rebuttals of the theoretical model were discussed from a theoretical perspective. Studying the empirics of the case of the conflict in Israel and Palestine, this current chapter, therefore, discusses these possible limitations and rebuttals from an empirical perspective: Section 8.1. reflects the periods in which the external communication of the Israeli side as topdog is also dominated by shaming and shows that even these exceptions can be explained with the general logic of the theoretical model, that draws on the conflict structure as explanation for the selection of strategies of external communication by the conflict parties. Section 8.2., then, discusses the potential alternative explanations that might be able to explain a selection of strategies of external communication as observed in chapter 5 (which were introduced, from a theoretical perspective, in section 3.5.3.), this shows that all of them can be clearly dismissed. Altogether, this way additional validity is lent to the theoretical thesis that the selection of strategies of external communication of the conflict parties is shaped by the structure of the conflict.

8.1 Routine vs. crisis communication

In section 5.2.2. it was shown that some short stages can be observed during which also the Israeli side predominantly used negative communication. The peaks with an extraordinarily high ratio of posts containing negative messages converge with particular events: the "Operation Pillar of Defense" of IDF in the Gaza Strip in November 2012, the Gaza War in summer 2014 and the climax of the "stabbing intifada" in late 2015. All of these events were perceived by the Israeli side as a "crisis" and/or "emergency". In comparison to the conditions during "routine" stages of the conflict, which have been described and discussed in chapters 6 and 7, these short "crisis" stages provide different conditions for the external communication of the conflict parties.[1] On the one hand, the crisis stages were characterized by an

1 Indeed, the Israeli practitioners distinguish in their work between "routine" stages and "crisis" or "emergency" stages. The IDF, for example, differs in its strategic planning between three different "military functional situations" as the context for its operations that are all relevant for its efforts to achieve legitimacy (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 4): "Routine", on the one hand, and the efforts during and after "war" or "emergency", on the other hand. During all these situations „safeguarding Israel's international status" (Times of Israel 13.08.2015) is a core objective. The differentiation of the IDF between "routine", on the one hand, and "war" and "emergency", on the other hand, is based on the intensity of the conflict at a particular moment. In contrast to a "routine" situation, "war" and "emergency" situations describe situations with a particularly high intensity of the conflict and with particularly much international and domestic public attention. The differentiation between "war" and "emergency" further specifies the scale of the operation. In contrast to a "War situation" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 4, section C), according to IDF's understanding, an "Emergency situation refers to campaigns and limited operations that are not within a war framework" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 4, section B). As incidents like the Lebanon war in 2006 (Gilboa & Shai 2011: 35; Medzini 2012: 8) and the Mavi Marmara incident (Allan & Curtis 2011; Jerusalem Post 04.06.2010; Jerusalem Post 04.07.2013) have shown, wars and emergencies are particular critical moments, in which the image of the IDF and the State of Israel as a whole (abroad as well as in the Israeli population) can be damaged severely. Therefore, in order to prevent such a severe damage, the IDF prepares for such critical situations. The 2015 IDF doctrine aims at anticipating possible implications of the IDF's handling of war and emergency situations on how the IDF and Israel are perceived publicly and to adapt the planning in a way avoiding damage for the image of the IDF and Israel: "National, public perception, and legal efforts to maintain and improve the legitimacy of the operation will begin already in the preparations stage and will continue during the campaign to maintain and improve the legitimacy of the operation both in Israel and in the international community. Use will be made of domestic and external public perception efforts, as well as efforts in the international arena at the diplomatic level, in the media, and in the legal sphere" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 22). These "Efforts during or after an Emergency or War, accompanying the operation and the efforts after it" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 36, section C) are "directed at having both a short-term impact – advancing legitimacy during the military operation until its completion under

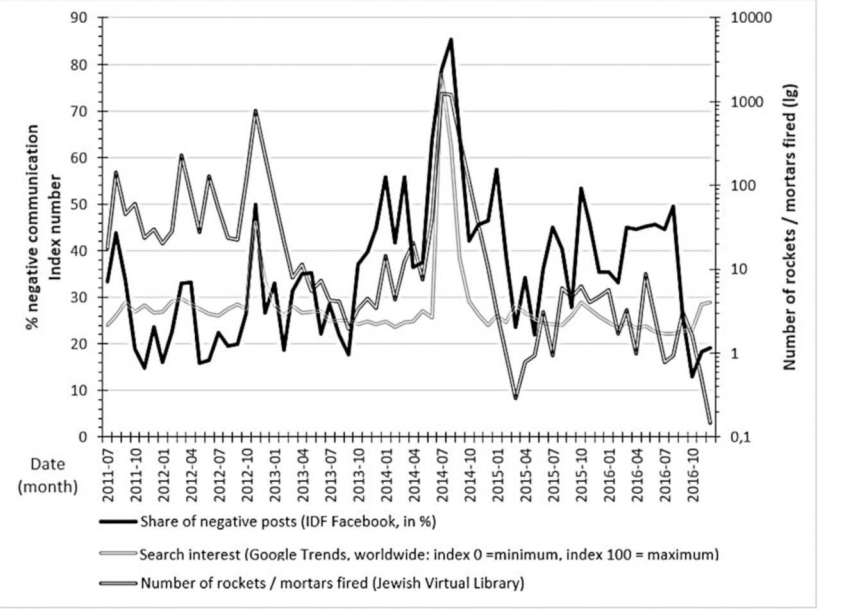
extraordinary intensity of the conflict. On the other hand, each of these events was accompanied by a particularly high international attention toward the conflict:

During the crisis stages, the conflict was particularly intense. On both sides the number of attacks, as well as the number of fatalities and the overall damage resulting from the conflict, was particularly high. From the perspective of the picturability pathway, this matters: as the Israeli side suffers from more damage and fatalities during these high-intensity stages of the conflict than during most of the time of the conflict, it also means that the Israeli side has more opportunities to present corresponding pictures and stories than usual. Having, therefore, more particularly promising pictures and stories for shaming, Israel's opportunities to use shaming increase during these particularly intense stages. Indeed, it can be observed that the share of negative posts in the external communication of the Israeli side was particularly high, when, for instance, the number of rockets and mortars

favorable conditions – as well medium and long term impact – preserving the operation's strategic achievements and freedom of action to use force again in the area when needed" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 36, section C). War and emergency situations, however, are an exception. While the conflict is continuing all the time, most of the time the intensity of the conflict is much lower. The IDF calls this kind of situation a "routine situation". According to the IDF's understanding, a "Routine situation refers to ongoing security, a limited and ongoing confrontation, and the campaign between wars (CBW)" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 4, section A) which describes the IDF's plans and efforts for the time between the most intensive stages of the conflict. While the operational context in these situations is different, the intensity of the conflict and the fighting as well as the attention from international and domestic audiences are lower, the IDF, nevertheless, considers (external) communication and related actions for achieving legitimacy during routine situations as equally important as its efforts during war and emergency situations. The rationale of the IDF's high efforts also during the more peaceful time is to create "legitimacy for Israeli action and deny a legitimate basis for the enemy's action" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 30, section D) in this way. From achieving legitimacy Israel profits not only in the political, diplomatic and economic field but also in the military field, as "Creating legitimacy" enables "Israel to initiate a confrontation, give our forces freedom of operation while depriving the enemy of freedom of operation during Routine, War, and Emergency situations" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 24, section D). The IDF expects this to have a long-term impact: "Effort during Routine is designed to build the ideal conditions for creating legitimacy for the IDF and international support. This effort is fundamental and is meant to have a long-term impact, and changes and improves the IDF's situation and method of operation in light of the challenges posed by the claims of those who want to delegitimize Israel's military action, which are based chiefly on a critical analysis of Israel's actions" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 36, section A). The general efforts aiming at a long-term impact shall be, moreover, complemented by efforts that "are directed toward having a medium-term impact" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 36, section B) and that advance "legitimacy for IDF operational activity in the field during a specific operation and time frame" (IDF Doctrine 2015: chapter 3, paragraph no. 36, section B).

fired (one of the most typical forms of attack of Hamas) by Hamas and other Palestinian combatants on Israel was extraordinarily high (Jewish Virtual Library 2018b; cf. figure 29).

Figure 29: Comparison between the monthly shares of negative posts within the external communication on the English-speaking Facebook page of the IDF and the global search interest for the term "Israel" (according to Google Trends 2019) and the number of rockets and mortars shot on Israel (according to Jewish Virtual Library 2018b). All values are smoothed.[2] The major peaks of the different variables clearly overlap during crisis stages: the 2012 Gaza War (Nov 2012) and the 2014 Gaza War (Jul/Aug 2014).[3]



During the crisis stages, the international attention for the conflict was particularly high. The corresponding events (especially the Gaza War in 2014) were top

2 Exponential smoothing with the data processing function of Microsoft Excel was applied (https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/use-the-analysis-toolpak-to-perform-complex-data-analysis-6c67ccf0-f4a9-487c-8dec-bdb5a2cefab6; last access: 26.07.2019). A smoothing constant of $\alpha = 0.3$ was used.

3 The average number of rockets/mortars fired after the 2014 Gaza War is lower than before. An explanation is that in the period after the 2014 Gaza War often stabbing attacks instead of rocket attacks were conducted. The higher shares of negative communication after the 2014 Gaza War coincide with the "stabbing intifada", a stage with particularly many stabbing attacks.

stories in all news formats and, even abroad, it was hard to avoid hearing about the conflict in Israel and Palestine during these periods. As metric indicators such as the statistics from Google Trends show, the attention online for the conflict was also extraordinarily high during these stages (Google Trends 2019; cf. figure 29). From the perspective of the audience pathway, this made it difficult for Israel, as the topdog, to distract audiences abroad from the conflict and to avoid talking about the crisis situation which was being discussed widely internationally. From the perspective of the prioritization pathway and the Israeli interests, the omnipresence of the conflict in the international news and the abundance of allegations imposed a major risk that Israel's image might suffer severe and long-lasting damage by these harmful, omnipresent allegations, if Israel were not to react. Consequently, Israel was forced by the extraordinary conditions to adapt its strategy of external communication temporarily and to defend itself instead of actively shaping its own image with branding. Indeed, the stages of particularly high attention again converged with the stages, when the share of negative posts in the external communication of the Israeli side was particularly high (cf. figure 29).

Table 12: Overview – Conditions for external communication and strategies of external communication selected by the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine (2x2 table)

Type of actor / Type of conflict stage	**Routine**	**Crisis**
Topdog (Israel)	Branding	Shaming
Underdog (PLO & PNA / Hamas)	Shaming	Shaming

8.2 Alternative explanations

In chapter 5 it has been shown that in the conflict in Israel and Palestine the external communication of the Palestinian side is continuously dominated by shaming, while, in contrast, the external communication of the Israeli side most of the time is dominated by branding. This distribution complies perfectly with the pre-

dictions of the theoretical model presented in chapter 3, which assumes that the conflict structure shapes the selection of the conflict parties' external communication strategies. Moreover, in chapters 6 and 7 empirical patterns could be found complying with all theoretical patterns of the theoretical model. Following the logic of pattern-matching, this confirms the plausibility of the theoretical model. In section 3.5.3., however, alternative explanations were introduced that might be able to explain the selection of strategies of external communication observed in chapter 5 as well: Either the selection of the conflict parties' strategies of external communication could be influenced by the identities of the conflict parties or it could be the result of a nonreflective diffusion of common communication practices. The following sections, therefore, test both alternative explanations and show that both potential alternative explanations, in contrast to the thesis that the conflict parties act strategically and that the selection is shaped by the conflict structure, do not fit in with the empirical evidence which can be observed when studying the conflict in Israel and Palestine:

8.2.1 External communication as a dysfunctional relict from Jewish history

A possible alternative explanation for the selection of the types of messages in the external communication of the conflict parties observed in chapter 5 could be that the selection is less a strategic decision based on the interests and opportunities shaped by the conflict structure but rather is influenced by the identities of the conflict parties, which subconsciously determine the choice of the conflict parties. According to this alternative explanation, the conflict parties would choose different strategies of external communication because their identities differ. Indeed, Ron Schleifer argues that it is not the structure of the conflict that shapes the Israeli communication but rather that the roots of the Israeli "hasbara"[4] lay deep in the Jewish history. According to this explanation, Israel's modern strategy of external communication is a relict shaped by the historical experience of pressure toward Jewish communities across the past decades and centuries (Schleifer 2003: 123ff.), which is, according to Schleifer, dysfunctional, as it is from his point of view too "benign" (Schleifer 2003: 145). From this point of view, the selection of messages from the different branches of the Israeli government used for their external communication which focuses on branding is not a rational, well-planned strategic decision but a failure, due to a lack of reflection. Choosing a shaming-dominated strategy from this point of view would be the rational, more efficient

4 "Hasbara" can be translated roughly with the English term "explain". It is the Hebrew term for "external communication". Today the Israeli practitioners rather tend to prefer the term "public diplomacy" instead, as they consider the early Hasbara efforts as too defensive (Isr MFA2: 57, 48; cf. also Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2006: 735).

choice. Indeed, it is true that the conflict in Israel and Palestine and the conflict parties involved have a long, eventful, unique history. Hosting the holy sites of several world religions, furthermore, means that strong religious emotions are connected with the conflict area as well. Therefore, the case offers a hard case for showing that not this alternative explanation, but the explanation introduced earlier in this study (cf. chapter 3) explains the selection of external communication by the conflict parties best.

The empirical data collected for this study, however, provides strong evidence against this alternative explanation arguing in favor of the hypothesis and assumptions presented earlier in this study that the conflict parties act strategically and that the conflict structure is the most important factor for explaining the selection of strategies of external communication:

First, section 7.6. has clearly shown that the process of selecting and developing a strategy of external communication is far from nonreflective. In contrast, both sides have evaluation mechanisms with which they constantly control for the success of their external communication. In contrast to the assessment of Schleifer, that using more shaming would be more promising for the Israeli side than using a branding-dominated strategy of external communication, these evaluation mechanisms clearly show that negative communication is less successful for the Israeli side than positive communication, especially when reaching out to the target group the Israeli branches have defined as their core target group: audiences that are so far not yet affiliated with the Israeli side.

The prevalent selection of branding, consequently, is not an emotional decision or a decision made by habit but a calculated, reflected decision. Quite the contrary, the interviews with Israeli practitioners indicate that their use of shaming in posts (and not their use of branding), at least occasionally, might be affectual. When asked about why they still use occasionally shaming, despite acknowledging before that positive communication is the more efficient strategy, practitioners from the Israeli side start to use more emotional argumentation patterns than in the rest of the interview. Referring to an example where the foreign press did not count a Palestinian attacker as a terrorist but as a victim, for instance, a practitioner from the Government Press Office argues, indicating an affective reaction: "Because we, it was our blood. We have to comment on accusation toward the conflict" (Isr GPO: 47). This means that it is not the use of branding that can be characterized as dysfunctional from a strategic perspective but, quite the opposite, the use of shaming. Such emotional reactions and motivations, however, as shown earlier, remain comparatively seldom and are only the exception.

Furthermore, whilst history and culture can be a source of pictures and stories for the external communication (cf. section 7.4.2.), only pictures and stories are selected that fit into the strategic concept (cf. section 7.6.). Other pictures and stories that belong to the history and culture of the conflict parties as well, but which are

not efficient or interesting enough or that even might undermine the strategically shaped message for the external communication, are purposely left out. To achieve the strategic goal to reach out to audiences that are so far not affiliated with one of the conflict parties the Israeli side even goes so far as to even select also content that it expects will appeal with the corresponding target group, even if it might be unpopular amongst Pro-Israeli audiences, i.e., audiences that share a similar historically grown ideological background (Isr IDF: 64f.).

In conclusion, the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine is clearly reflective and success-oriented and, therefore, adapts to the opportunities and constraints provided by the conflict structure. Aspects of culture, history and identity play only a subordinate role for the selection of the conflict parties' strategies of external communication.

8.2.2 External communication as a result of nonreflective diffusion of typical activism respectively marketing practices

Another possible alternative explanation for the selection of the types of messages in the conflict parties' external communication that could be observed in chapter 5 could be that the selection is less a strategic decision based on the interests and opportunities shaped by the conflict structure but rather the result of a nonreflective diffusion process of typical activism and marketing practices respectively. The practitioners on the Palestinian side often work together with Pro-Palestinian NGOs and activists (cf. e.g. PLO MA: 153, 156-158; Pal UN: 56-58, 63-65; Pal UK: 142). The Israeli government in contrast can afford to work together with marketing[5] consultants (cf. e.g. ISRAEL21c 20.01.2005[6]), and as a state and full member of the international community, with other governments and administrations as well (cf. section 4.1.2.3.). This means that the different conflict parties are linked to different social contexts: The Palestinian side is mainly linked to the activist community and the Israeli side rather to a professional marketing / diplomacy community. Both communities might describe "best practices", which are mirrored in a nonreflective way by the conflict parties as members of the corresponding communities, regardless of the conflict and the operational context, including the constraints and opportunities it creates. From this point of view, shaming might simply be the strategy of external communication perceived by the activist community as "best

5 Indeed, one interviewee from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs compares the work of the ministry's Digital Diplomacy Department with the work of an advertising agency: "So, obviously, we are more like an advertising agency, because we are making 'public diplomacy'" (Isr MFA2: 50).

6 Some of the agencies (as it is also the case for the advertising agency mentioned in the cited article) are, however, not motivated by financial interests but offer Israel their services for free.

practice" and that, therefore, without further reflections is the one adopted by the Palestinian side as a member of this community. Branding might be, in contrast, the strategy of external communication perceived by the marketing / diplomacy community as "best practice" and that, therefore, without further reflections is the strategy adopted by the Israeli side as a member of this community.

The empirical data collected for this study, however, provides strong evidence against this alternative explanation and favors the hypothesis and assumptions presented earlier in this study that the conflict parties act strategically and that the conflict structure is the most important factor for explaining the selection of strategies of external communication:

Again, (as previously argued for the other potential alternative explanation described above) section 7.6. has clearly shown that the process of selecting and developing a strategy of external communication is far from nonreflective. Both conflict parties have evaluation mechanisms and control their external communication for success. It is, therefore, reflecting and success-oriented and not nonreflexive.

Furthermore, the self-image of the conflict parties also speaks against the hypothesis that the selection of the types of messages in the conflict parties' external communication is only the result of a nonreflective diffusion process of typical activism and marketing practices respectively. As the conflict parties in the Israel and Palestine conflict were among the first conflict parties to use social media for their external communication at all, they perceive themselves as "pioneers" that have had to be the first ones to develop a strategy for social media warfare (cf. e.g. Isr IDF: 109), as they had, being the first ones, no role model to copy from. Indeed, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit,[7] for example, has also been described by major media outlets and other armies as a pioneer and role model in the field of social media warfare (Guardian 31.01.2015; Channel 4 31.01.2015; Huffington Post 16.11.2012).

7 For the unit the pioneering role as "early adopters" (Isr IDF: 109) means to adapt to its environment as good as possible, especially to the operational context (i.e., the conflict setting) and technological developments but also to the specific communication context of different types communication and societal developments. Being pioneers and early adopters means for the IDF to constantly look "to do the interesting stuff" and to "Do it new and do it in an appealing way" (Isr IDF: 109).

9. Conclusions

9.1 Summary

This study examined (1) which strategies of external communication conflict parties use during asymmetric conflicts and (2) what shapes the selection of these communication strategies. Empirically both research questions were examined by studying the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine, using their external communication in social media as an exemplary case. The study focused on the analysis of "external communication", which is understood to be open and fully attributable unidirectional mass communication of an official organization representing a conflict party that is directed to a foreign audience, toward which the communicating actor has a friendly or at least neutral attitude, and in particular directed toward so far unaffiliated civil population.

To examine which strategies of external communication conflict parties use during asymmetric conflicts, a typology of the strategies of external communication used by actors involved in conflicts was introduced in chapter 2. Drawing on the literatures on naming and shaming, as well as on public diplomacy and further related literatures, it was shown that there are two types of strategies of external communication which are particularly promising for conflict parties: "branding" (positive self-portrayal) and "shaming" (negative descriptions of the opponent). In chapter 4, then, a research design and a methodological approach for identifying and analyzing strategies of external communication, consisting of a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods,[1] were introduced. Using the typology developed in chapter 2 and the methodological approach introduced in chapter 4, a comprehensive data set was created and analyzed in order to describe the strategies of external communication of the most important English-speaking social media channels of the government of the State of Israel on the one side and of Hamas and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on the other side:

1 The methods introduced in this study can be also used as a toolbox for identifying (external) communication strategies in other conflicts and in other communication contexts.

The results of the empirical analysis (as presented in chapter 5) show that the external communication on the Israeli channels is dominated by branding, while the external communication on the channels of the Palestinian side is consistently dominated by shaming. Only during some short and particularly intense stages of the conflict, the Israeli external communication was dominated by shaming as well. The variation of the strategies of external communication across platforms and amongst the different branches of the same conflict party, in contrast, is comparatively small. The observed results contradict the theoretical expectations of established theories from the research on blaming, which would expect a negativity bias, and marketing research, which would expect a predominance of positive communication.

Instead, in chapter 3, the thesis was developed that the selection of strategies of external communication is shaped by the (asymmetric) conflict structure. The plausibility of this thesis was empirically demonstrated in chapters 6, 7 and 8 by examining the external communication in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: All patterns of the theoretical model presented in chapter 3 could be also observed empirically. It was shown that the conflict parties in the conflict carefully and strategically select their strategies of external communication, using evaluation mechanisms to observe the success of their external communication. Furthermore, it was shown that the asymmetric distribution of capabilities among the different conflict parties shapes different interests (prioritization pathway), opportunities to convince (audience pathway) and opportunities to present (picturability pathway), making a branding-dominated strategy of external communication more attractive for the Israeli side and a shaming-dominated strategy more attractive for the Palestinian side.

Prioritization pathway: The asymmetric conflict structure shapes divergent *interests* of the conflict parties, which influence the selection of external communication strategies: The empirical research showed that the Palestinian side is strongly dissatisfied with the status quo of the conflict. Both the conflict and challenging the status quo are therefore making up the single number one priority for their external communication. The Israeli side, in contrast, is comparatively satisfied with the status quo, as it can enjoy various benefits from having a lot of capabilities, such as political control, wealth and easy access to the international diplomatic system. Israel is, therefore, interested in defending these privileges. The conflict is only one of a variety of interests for Israel, such as, for instance, fostering the Israeli economy and Israel's international status, and, therefore, not the only priority for its external communication. Consequently, shaming, allowing references to the conflict and challenging the status quo, is an attractive strategy for the Palestinian side as the underdog, and branding, allowing to sideline the conflict and showcasing one's economic and cultural strengths, is an attractive strategy for the Israeli side as topdog.

Audience pathway: The Palestinian side has far better *opportunities to convince* for the use of shaming: Research from cognition psychology (Vandello et al. 2007[2]) shows that neutral observers tend to support the underdog, i.e., an actor which is disadvantaged in comparison to its opponent, in a competitive constellation in which the underdog is confronted with a superior opponent. This underdog/topdog effect can be also observed for the perception of the conflict in Israel and Palestine abroad. The Palestinian side, being perceived as the underdog, profits from this effect, as it makes it for them much easier to acquire sympathy by using shaming and referring to the conflict than for the Israeli side as topdog. For the Israeli side, being the by far more powerful conflict party, in contrast, it is comparatively difficult to present itself credibly and convincingly as a victim. Instead, the Israeli side tends to select predominantly branding as an alternative promising strategy of external communication.

Picturability pathway: The Palestinian side has far better *opportunities to present* for the use of shaming, while the Israeli side has far better opportunities to present for the use of branding: It can be shown that its suffering from a comparatively large number of (civilian) fatalities and the occupation gives the Palestinian side particularly good pictures and stories for shaming. Both, in turn, are a consequence of the asymmetric distribution of military capabilities. The asymmetric distribution of capabilities makes the conflict parties adapt their combat strategies in a way, which causes a comparatively high number of fatalities on the Palestinian side and among these fatalities, particularly many civilian fatalities. Furthermore, having a lot of military capabilities makes the Israeli side powerful enough to control territory claimed and partially populated by a population identifying itself with the opponent as well. In contrast, having a lot of financial capabilities makes it possible for the Israeli side to invest in prestigious projects and to show off its economic attractiveness. Both offer attractive pictures and stories for branding. Additionally, having more social/institutional capabilities allows Israel also to show off its closeness to the international community and to frame itself as a stable, reliable partner with shared values, which again offers attractive pictures and stories for branding.

In conclusion, all three pathways explaining how the asymmetric distribution shapes the selection of external communication of conflict parties during asymmetric conflicts could be observed empirically for the conflict in Israel and Palestine.[3] The three pathways are intertwined and mutually reinforce each other.

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2 Cf. also Yarchi et al. 2017: 360, 361, 364, 365, 366, 373; Prell 2002.

3 The observed empirical patterns (cf. chapters 5-8) clearly match with the theoretical expectations derived from the literature on the characteristics of the structure of asymmetric conflicts and the literature describing cognitive effects influencing the perception of these characteristics of the structure of asymmetric conflicts and that were formulated in the theoretical chapter (cf. chapter 3). For both sides of the conflict, the Israeli and the Palestinian one, empirical evidence matching with the theoretical expectations and explanations introduced

9.2 Theoretical core contributions

To the conflict research literature

While many scholars of conflict research have acknowledged the relevance of external communication during asymmetric conflicts (in social media) in side-notes, so far, a study putting this subject at the center of a comprehensive study has been missing. This study has, for the first time, collected the knowledge about the issue splintered across the conflict research literature together and developed a comprehensive theory about this important dimension of modern wars and in this way contributes to closing this important research gap.

To the public diplomacy literature

Scholars of public diplomacy have been pointing out that their field still lacks theorization and comprehensive, systematic empirical studies (e.g. Entman 2008: 87; Gilboa 2008: 56; Fullerton 2016). This study contributes to the theory-building within the field of public diplomacy by offering a theoretical model about the use of external communication in a major relevant context, the context of (asymmetric) conflicts. Unlike most studies in the field of public diplomacy, the analysis was not purely descriptive. An important variable determining the selection of the content used in external communication could be identified: the structure of the conflict. Following this specific example, examining external communication during conflicts, theory-building in the field of public diplomacy will be likely to profit from more generally examining the relationship between the operational environment and the selection of the external communication content.

9.3 Limitations and proposals for future research: Thinking beyond the conflict in Israel and Palestine

The empirical research of this study is limited to the comprehensive analysis of a single case, the conflict in Israel and Palestine, and only one communication con-

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before in chapter 3 could be found not only for individual branches but across all the different branches. Similarly, when analyzing the press articles comparable evidence could be found across different media outlets, even if the political orientation of the corresponding media outlets differed (for instance, similar arguments could be found in the liberal Haaretz and the conservative Jerusalem Post). The patterns of the pathways, furthermore, could be observed across various different thematic fields. Altogether, the research results, measured against the methodological requirements of pattern matching, provide very strong evidence for the validity of the theoretical model developed in this study.

text, the context of external communication, and a limited time frame, 2008-2016 (in 2008 the first branches of the conflict parties started using social media for their external communication). Whilst the methods literature about within-case analyses convincingly demonstrates that single-case studies allow theory-testing by reconstructing the tested theoretical patterns as well (cf. also Hak & Dul 2009a: 937ff.; Gerring 2013: 5), as it was also done in this study, additional case studies could add additional confirmation and help to learn more about the applicability of the patterns shown in this study for a very ideal-typical case of an asymmetric conflict for cases with less ideal-typical conditions:

The **conflict between Turkey and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)**, the dominant faction within the SDF, in Northern Syria in the context of Syrian civil war offers an example for a for non-dyadic conflict. SDF and YPG are not only involved in a conflict with Turkey but are involved in a conflict with Daesh at the same time, as well. Occasionally, furthermore, SDF and YPG have been involved in clashes with the military forces of the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad. Despite having combat experience from the war against Daesh and profiting from foreign arms deliveries, in comparison to the Turkish army, one of the biggest armies in the world (IISS 2017: 166ff.), SDF and YPG (IISS 2017: 406f.) have much fewer military capabilities. And the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES), to which SDF belongs, is not officially recognized as a state. Still being affected by the destruction from the war, despite the opportunity of oil sales, means that the economic & financial capabilities of the NES are more limited than those of Turkey as well.[4] Consequently, the conflict between the two conflict parties shares the characteristics of an asymmetric conflict. Whilst, the conflict with the Syrian government could also be characterized as an asymmetric conflict, the conflict with Daesh, in contrast, cannot be characterized as asymmetric conflict. Being designated as a terrorist organization internationally, the international status of Daesh is even lower than the status of the NES and whilst Daesh was militarily more powerful than YPG and its allies in Syria during some stages of the conflict,[5] the superiority was not as decisive to characterize it as clearly asymmetric. This makes it possible for YPG, SDF and the NES to select for their external communication the most promising pictures and stories from both conflict lines. As presented in this study for a similar example, the conflict in Israel and Palestine, the conflict with Turkey can be expected to offer particularly promising pictures and stories for shaming for

4 Kurdistan 24, for example, reports about a rise in underage workers due to the "Poor economy in Syrian Kurdistan" (Kurdistan 24: 01.07.2019).

5 The siege of Kobane stopped the rise of Daesh. From then on, Daesh has lost more and more territory to SDF / YPG (cf. also Aljazeera 27.01.2015 describing the end of the siege of Kobane as "beginning of the end for ISIL").

YPG, SDF and the NES. As Daesh is highly unpopular internationally, in contrast, it does remain also attractive for YPG, SDF and the NES to showcase their military successes against Daesh and to present itself this way toward the Western world and the international community as an ally in the fight against Daesh (cf. also the description of the "Angel of Kobane" and the related explanations in chapter 1). Indeed, a first exploratory analysis conducted in the context of this study indicates that YPG and SDF choose for their external communication in the social media a mix of the corresponding pictures and stories.

The **civil war in Syria** between the Syrian government and opposition groups such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (SNC), furthermore, provides us with an example to examine the effects of changing power capabilities and levels of asymmetry within the relations between two conflict parties on the selection of external communication strategies. As several ten thousand soldiers from the Syrian Arab Army of President Bashar al-Assad's government had defected to the opposition, the Syrian government lost the military dominance in Syria during the early stages of the civil war (Khlebnikov 2018), a dominance which an ideal-typical topdog has. The international image of the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad as its leader has been damaged severely as well. Both made the relations between and the opportunities for the conflict parties in the civil war less asymmetric. In the meanwhile, due to the support of Russian and Iranian military and paramilitary forces, the Syrian government has partially recovered its military strength, regaining the upper hand in the conflict and has been very successful in fighting back oppositional forces such as the FSA, regaining the control over the biggest cities and large parts of the country, whilst the opposition has been weakened.[6] Consequently, the asymmetry between the conflict parties has increased. Following the theoretical model developed in this study, the opportunities for using shaming should have decreased for the Syrian government, as the asymmetry of the conflict has increased over time, and the Syrian government should be expected to adapt their external communication correspondingly by decreasing the share of shaming messages in its external communication. If such a trend could be observed indeed, this would show that the model developed in this study and applied as a static model for the recent stage of the conflict in Israel and Palestine is also applicable as a dynamic model. Indeed, a first exploratory analysis conducted in the context of this study indicates that the communication of the English-speaking channels of the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA),[7] one of the most important channels of

6 Cf. also World Politics Review 19.02.2019, also reporting about a first recovery of the Syrian government's diplomatic status.

7 Link to SANA's English-speaking website: https://sana.sy/en/ (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

external communication of the Syrian government, changed: The share of branding posts has increased, the share of shaming posts decreased. The social media channels of the oppositional SNC,[8] in contrast, have remained clearly dominated by shaming.

The case of the **conflict between the Chinese government and secessionist Uighurs** offers an example of a conflict with a clearly asymmetric structure, which takes place in a different region to the Middle East and which involves a superpower as topdog. As China is a superpower the asymmetry to its opponent concerning its capabilities is even larger than in the case of Israel and Palestine: China's army is even bigger than the Israeli one (IISS 2017: 278ff.), the access to the Chinese market not only attractive but essential for the trade of many countries[9] and the People's Republic of China is not only recognized as a state but it also is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. From observing this clear asymmetric character, from the perspective of the theory developed in this study, it can be expected that the Chinese government, as topdog, predominantly uses branding in its external communication, whilst the Uighur dissidents as the clear underdog, mostly use shaming. In contrast to the Israeli external communication, the Chinese, government primarily uses social media channels maintained by state-owned news channels such as Xinhua,[10] China Central Television,[11] and The People's Daily newspaper[12] for its external communication in social media (Li 2012: 2248) and not social media pages of embassies or other branches of the government and its administration (Gong 2014: 2ff.). Indeed, a first exploratory analysis conducted in the context of this study indicates that the Chinese state media's English-speaking channels publish almost exclusively posts with world news, familiar to other news channels, as well as a rich variety of branding posts. The World Uighur Congress, as one of the main representations of the Uighur opposition and diaspora, in contrast, publishes on its English-speaking Facebook page almost exclusively shaming posts.[13] A comprehensive analysis could verify these initial observations and in this way, by showing that the theoretically predicted patterns cannot only be observed for cases in the Middle East but also for regions with a different culture, provide additional evidence that the conflict structure is more dominant in shaping the selection of

8 Link to the SNC's English-speaking Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/SyrianNationalCoalition.en/ (source accessed: 28.07.2019).

9 Cf. e.g. the GDP values as an indicator for the size of China's market: IISS 2017: 278.

10 Link to the English-speaking Twitter channel of Xinhua: https://twitter.com/XHNews (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

11 Link to the English-speaking Twitter channel of China Central Television: https://twitter.com/CCTV (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

12 Link to the English-speaking Twitter channel of The People's Daily newspaper: https://twitter.com/PDChina (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

13 Link to the English-speaking Facebook page of the World Uyghur Congress: https://www.facebook.com/uyghurcongress/ (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

strategies of external communication by strategically acting conflict parties than cultures and identities. Furthermore, it can be observed that the Chinese external communication channels almost not at all address domestic conflicts. A possible explanation might be that the superpower status and international economic dependencies make it easier for the Chinese government to silence corresponding discourses than for a normal topdog.[14]

Furthermore, it could be considered that applying the theoretical concepts and methodological approaches developed for this study onto non-asymmetric conflicts or communication constellations other than external communication in order to further advance the theory-building about communication during conflicts also for other contexts could be beneficial. For less asymmetric conflicts e.g., providing more or less equal opportunities for the conflict parties, more mixed strategies could be expected from the point of view of the theoretical ideas developed in this study. Furthermore, historical cases could be examined as well. While already prior to the 1990s many conflicts had an asymmetric conflict structure (e.g. the war in Vietnam), these conflicts were often embedded in the larger context of the Cold War. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore if for these cases the regional conflict structure remained the dominant influence shaping the external communication of the conflict parties or whether the context of the Cold War with a strong ideological background on both sides overshadowed the influence of the regional (asymmetric) conflict structures partially.[15]

The knowledge of how the structures of a competitive operational environment influence the selection of strategies of external communication during asymmetric conflicts gained in this study, moreover, might also help to get an improved understanding of communication processes in non-violent competitive and conflictive settings with actors with asymmetric power relations and divergent opportunities and constraints, such as the campaigning of political candidates before elections, for example. Indeed, scholars studying campaigning have observed that challengers (which, using the terminology from this study, could often be considered as underdogs, while the incumbency often gives candidates a bonus making them to topdogs) tend to use more negative campaigning than incumbents and shame frequently their incumbent opponents for (alleged) failures of their political work. Incumbents, in contrast, tend to emphasize their political successes and present themselves as statesmanlike instead (cf. e.g. Haynes & Rhine 1998; see also

14 It might be possible, for example, that the strong dependencies increase the ability of China to silence parts of the discourse. Indeed, Sikkink and Risse (2013: 287, 289f.) argue for the discourse about the diffusion of human rights that it is more difficult to pressurize governments of states to comply with international norms that are authoritarian and not vulnerable to material pressure.

15 Cf. also the shift from ideology and broader public interest in the "old wars" to identity and particular policies in the "new wars" described by Mary Kaldor (Kaldor 2013).

Peterson & Djupe 2005; Lau & Brown Rovner 2009: 294). Like the conflict parties in asymmetric conflicts, the competing parties, furthermore, tend to focus on their strongest topics, except if a certain other topic receives particularly more attention (cf. e.g. Denter 2013).[16]

9.4 Practical recommendations

From the research results of this study, however, not only lessons for theory-building can be learned, but we can also learn lessons for the practical work of practitioners. The following sections summarize and present the most important corresponding recommendations. As this study promotes a humanitarian, pacifist normative perspective, the recommendations do not focus on how one party can become even more efficient and win against another one, but on how the knowledge gained in this study can contribute to conflict resolution.

9.4.1 Practical recommendations for the media, international donors and practitioners involved in conflict resolution and advocating for peace

The conflict-conserving and partisan messages dominating reporting on the conflict in Israel and Palestine need to be complemented by reporting from a constructive perspective, identifying both problems and solutions, which could be used to overcome these problems.

This study has shown which strategies of external communication are used during asymmetric conflicts, studying the conflict in Israel and Palestine as an example. It has been described which types of communication tactics are predominant in the external communication of the conflict parties: branding and shaming. None of these strategies are very useful to promote conflict resolution and peace-making.

16 Furthermore, the 2018 House of Representatives elections in the USA and the 2018 Bavarian parliamentary elections are good examples for cases in which the ruling party lost badly after focusing their campaigns on negativity and (alleged) problems in the country instead of presenting successes of themselves leading the government: In his campaigning for the 2018 Congress elections US President Trump focused his campaigning on alleged migration problems instead of highlighting the promising economic situation. This led to a loss of his Republican Party in the nation-wide House of Representatives elections by a large margin. Similarly, in the campaigning for the 2018 Bavarian parliamentary election, the ruling CSU party focused in their campaigning on alleged migration problems and even attacked the German chancellor from its German sister party CDU despite being part of the federal government itself. This strategy led to huge public protests and the worst election result of the party for decades.

On the contrary, both branding and shaming strengthen the already existing polarization and the limitation on the mutually excluding categories of "Pro-Palestinian" or "Pro-Israeli", helping to export this fragmented way of thinking to foreign audiences and creating walls of words and a political gridlock situation there, too.

At the same time, the analysis also shows what types of messages are not used by the conflict parties in their external communication at all or, at least, only very rarely: Messages that could help to overcome the gridlock situation and contribute to conflict resolution such as messages that thematize peace efforts, cooperation and signs of sincere goodwill toward the opponent.

For the conflict in Israel and Palestine the reason for this is not that such initiatives do not exist. Quite the contrary, between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authorities even cooperation in the sensitive field of security actually exists. Even though such groups do not represent a majority by far, within both civil populations initiatives advocating for reconciliation and peace do exist. Within Israel, for example, initiatives like "Peace Now"[17] advocate for more Israeli efforts in the conflict resolution process and other initiatives facilitate the exchange between the Palestinian and Israeli civil population, fostering reconciliation. The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), for example, brings together family members of victims of conflict-related violence from both sides of the conflict, grieving together and working toward peace and reconciliation.[18] In Neve Shalom Palestinians and Israelis have even decided to move together and to live in a binational community, demonstrating that peaceful coexistence is possible.[19]

However, the conflict parties themselves are not interested in referring to the corresponding initiatives or publishing messages contributing to conflict resolution, they are constrained to use corresponding themes in their external communication: The PLO & the PNA tend to avoid showcasing their cooperation with the Israeli authorities so as to avoid domestic criticism because the English-speaking external communication can be also observed by Palestinian domestic audiences, where cooperation with the Israeli side due to the ongoing occupation tends to be not very popular and is even framed by domestic opponents as treason. Similarly, the different branches of the Israeli government engaged in external communication avoid corresponding messages. On the one hand, featuring cooperation with the Palestinian side is perceived by Israeli practitioners as risky, as featuring cooperation with the PNA might harm the reputation of the PNA, who are the more moderate and cooperative opponents for Israel, among the Palestinian population

17 Link to the English-speaking website of the initiative: https://peacenow.org.il/en (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

18 Link to the English-speaking website of the initiative: http://theparentscircle.org/en/about_eng/ (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

19 Link to the English-speaking website of the initiative: https://wasns.org/ (source accessed on: 14.07.2019).

and create opportunities for more radical alternatives such as Hamas to attack the PNA and further undermine their domestic reputation (cf. COGAT: 45, 47; Isr GPO1: 111-114; PLO MA: 196, 198; Pal UK 298-302). On the other hand, many of the peace initiatives from within the Israeli civil population are perceived critically by high-ranking Israeli politicians.[20] Therefore, corresponding references are also not featured in the Israeli external communication.

The lack of alternative constructive reporting is particularly problematic, as, like the conflict parties, the international media as another important group of actors reporting on the conflict has, so far, done little to fill this gap (though often but not always the international media outlets are at least less partisan in their reporting than the conflict parties themselves): So far they mostly tend to focus on the violence of the conflict, short-term politics and single events of confrontational behavior, neglecting to report about the underlying problems and possible solutions to overcome these problems and existing initiatives dedicated to conflict resolution (cf. e.g. Kempf 2012: esp. 43 for an assessment of the reporting about the conflict in Israel and Palestine in the German media). Promising ideas for an alternative to these traditional journalist patterns for reporting on conflicts, which are partially labeled as "war journalism", are ideas from "peace journalism", a journalist approach aiming not only to be more critical toward their own reporting and its context but also to give more attention to peace initiatives and opportunities for conflict resolution (Çiftcioğlu 2017: 2f.; Lynch & Galtung 2010).

Similar reflections would also be helpful for practitioners involved in conflict resolution and advocating for peace for evaluating their external communication. Moreover, initiatives that are contributing to conflict resolution but that are not yet engaging in external communication should consider setting up a media presence to increase the visibility of their important work and the related message of peace, which so far remains underrepresented. International donors, in turn, should prioritize supporting initiatives that adapt constructive communication strategies over initiatives that spread polarizing messages.

20 Israel's 2016 NGO law (full official name: "Transparency Requirements for Parties Supported by Foreign State Entities Bill") was perceived, for example, as an attempt to hamper the work of critical NGOs including pro-peace groups (Voice of America 27.12.2015).

9.4.2 Practical recommendations for the educational system

The sensitivity in assessing conflicts and their medial representation as well as identifying opportunities for conflict resolution needs to be increased by adding corresponding modules to the civic education curricula.

This study has illustrated with the example of the underdog/topdog effect, that cognitive effects influence how audiences perceive conflicts. As the practitioners of the conflict parties in charge of the external communication spend a great deal of time working on the conflict of their conflict party and its medial presentation, they can develop a sensitivity for such effects. Not dealing with conflicts and their medial representation professionally, however, a majority of the viewers and readers abroad typically do not have a sensitivity for assessing conflicts and their medial representation.

Nevertheless, almost everybody is confronted regularly with reports on conflicts, even though they may not be confronted as extensively as professionals and only sporadically (cf. also Yarchi 2016: 293): Reports about conflicts are in the news almost every day. It is almost impossible, therefore, to not get confronted with such reports. Moreover, as recent attempts of extremists such as radical right-wing and Islamist groups using social media as a tool for radicalization demonstrate, even stable societies are not immune to hate-speech and the emergence of conflicts mediated by such hate-speech. For these reasons, assessing conflicts and their medial representation and (for the reasons explained in the previous recommendation) opportunities for conflict resolution should not only be taught in societies with on-going conflicts or post-conflict societies. Educational systems that have not yet introduced citizenship education and media education classes to their curricula should add corresponding classes. Educational systems that have already introduced civic education and media education classes to their curricula should evaluate whether they already include modules increasing the sensitivity in assessing conflicts and their medial representation, as well as identifying opportunities for conflict resolution. Such educational activities should include learning to assess and contextualize media contents, foster critical thinking and awareness for basic mechanisms of media and to provide an understanding of the complexity of conflicts, introducing examples of successful conflict resolution and conditions for conflict resolution.

While the currently existing education systems are constructed in a way that allows reaching out most easily to young people, not only young people should be educated and sensitized about the medial representation of conflicts and conflict resolution. Especially decision-makers such as policymakers in the ministries of foreign affairs, who decide about possible interventions into foreign conflicts, and multipliers such as media makers, who significantly contribute to shaping the

image of conflicts abroad, should critically reflect whether their work might be influenced by cognitive effects and possible biases resulting from these effects.

9.4.3 Practical recommendations for the Israeli authorities

Words cannot replace deeds completely. A full restoration of the image of the State of Israel, therefore, also requires a change of policies.

In the early days of the State of Israel, external communication was not a large priority for the Israeli decision-makers (Medzini 2012). Reportedly, for example, the founder and first Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion was rather skeptical about the effectiveness of Israeli public diplomacy. For example, the following statement has been attributed to him: "Never mind what the gentiles say, what counts is what the Jews will do" (Medzini 2012: 1). This study, in contrast, has shown that the assessment of the Israeli elites on the importance of external communication has changed since then significantly, also due to the experiences of PR disasters such as the 2006 Lebanon War.[21] In the meantime, the Israeli authorities are well aware of the importance of external communication and that it can make a significant difference. They are further aware that they have hardly a choice but to engage in the struggle for the international opinion, if they at least want to contain the damage caused by opponent external communication.

At the same time this study, however, has also shown that the power of words is not unlimited. Words matter greatly, but at the same time policies and deeds of the conflict parties and their observable implications matter, too (cf. also sections 7.2.-7.5.). Without deeds words are not "worthless", as Ben-Gurion was quoted saying as well (Shilon 2016: 139), but their power to distract from policies that are perceived as unjust or disproportional is only limited. Indeed, the first Israeli practitioners have already started to acknowledge this:[22] The Deputy Director-General for Media and Public Affairs at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later ambassador of Israel to Italy Gideon Meir for example observes: "Public diplomacy is not a cure-all for all of Israel's problems in the arena of public opinion. There are many factors, not just what we say, that influence the perception of Israel abroad. But Israel's public diplomacy can make a contribution and does – if not always in the immediate and short term, then certainly in the long run" (Israeli MFA 24.05.2005; cf. also

21 On the negative coverage Israel which has received during the 2006 Lebanon War cf. also Kalb & Saivetz 2007: 10ff.

22 And commentators in the Israeli press (e.g. Ynet 10.07.2009; Haaretz 04.06.2015; Moment Magazine 2008) and other studies (Haaretz 30.12.2012 about the study of the think tank Molad on the Israeli public diplomacy; Medzini 2012: 8) draw similar conclusions as well. Cf. also Goodman 2017.

Kruse 2013: 31). Similarly, the former IDF pilot and Israeli expert for intercultural communication Reuven Ben-Shalom acknowledges in the conservative Jerusalem Post: "we must admit that sometimes the problem isn't explaining the policy, but the policy itself" (Jerusalem Post 12.06.2014) and even former Israeli prime minister and president Shimon Peres was quoted by Gilboa "if the policy is bad, the best PR in the world will not help" (Gilboa 2006: 735; Griffin 2013: 21; Gilboa 2013: 122).

In conclusion, whilst branding remains the most efficient strategy of external communication for the Israeli side as topdog, it is no panacea for Israel's reputation, and Israel will require real policy changes, if it wants to safeguard its reputation from a long-term perspective.

9.4.4 Practical recommendations for the Palestinian conflict parties:

The Palestinian conflict parties need to think already about a post-conflict strategy of external communication.

The empirical analysis in chapter 5 has shown that the external communication of the Palestinian conflict parties is strongly (and partially even almost exclusively) dominated by shaming. Currently, the Palestinian image abroad is mostly built upon its role in the conflict, accusations toward an enemy / opponent (Israel) and the Palestinian victimhood and resilience. When one day a sincere peace agreement between the conflict parties is made, the Palestinian side will not be able to, and should not be able to, use the corresponding themes for its external communication any more for the following reasons:

1. When Israel changes its military policies, this will reduce the extent of the damage and fatalities on the Palestinian side and, therefore, the number of opportunities to present for the use of shaming will decrease for the Palestinian side.
2. A Palestinian strategy of external communication that builds up the image of the Palestinian side primarily based upon its enmity to Israel would risk undermining efforts for peace. If the agreed peace should be sustainable (and ideally lead to a positive peace and not only a negative peace, defined as the mere absence of violence[23]), corresponding messages, therefore, need to be avoided.
3. A resolution of the conflict will also change the operational environment, including the interests and opportunities of the Palestinian side. A fully independent and recognized Palestinian State and a resolution of the conflict, for example, would provide better opportunities for state-building and the Palestinian economy. The external communication could be used to support corresponding efforts, e.g. by pointing out economic opportunities and the attractiveness

23 On the distinction between positive and negative peace cf. Galtung & Fischer 2013.

of the Palestinian culture and attracting this way more tourists and foreign investors.

Therefore, the Palestinian side should include in their plans for a strategy of post-conflict policies the crucial aspect of communication, developing a plan for the transition of its external communication for adapting to a post-conflict setting as well. Indeed, the first practitioners within the PLO & the PNA have already started thinking about such a strategy of external communication for a future providing better conditions. The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, for example, has thought about possibilities to promote tourism and facilitate economic cooperation (cf. also General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific 2019). So far corresponding efforts, however, are not prioritized in the external communication, as the conflict is perceived as the single number one priority (cf. e.g. Pal Aus: 190ff.).

10. Literature and sources

10.1 Academic literature

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10.2 Interviews

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed with the consent of the interviewees. To provide confidentiality all interviews were anonymized.

Interviews with representatives of branches of the Israeli government:

Abbreviation	Branch that the interviewee represents respectively function of the interviewee	Location	Date
Isr IDF	Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)	Tel Aviv	01.03.2017
Isr COGAT	Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)	Tel Aviv	07.03.2017
Isr MFA1	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel	Jerusalem	09.03.2017
Isr MFA2	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel	Jerusalem	09.03.2017
Isr MoT	Ministry of Tourism of the State of Israel	Jerusalem	26.09.2017
Isr HM	COGAT alumnus / Pro-Israeli activist	Tel Aviv	25.09.2017
Isr PMO	IDF alumnus / Prime Minister's Office of the State of Israel	Jerusalem	01.10.2017
Isr GPO1	Government Press Office of the State of Israel	Jerusalem	08.03.2017
Isr GPO2	Government Press Office of the State of Israel	Jerusalem	26.03.2017

Interviews with representatives of branches of the PLO & the PNA:

Abbreviation	Branch that the interviewee represents respectively function of the interviewee	Location	Date
Pal UN	Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York	New York, NY	06.01.2017
Pal UK	Palestinian Mission to the United Kingdom	London	14.09.2017
Pal Aus	General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and The Pacific	Canberra	30.07.2018
Pal MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine	Ramallah	03.10.2017
PLO MA	Media advisor to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)	Ramallah	02.10.2017

10.3 Software

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10.4 News articles, magazines and blogs

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10.8 List of figures

10.9 List of tables

10.10 Online annex

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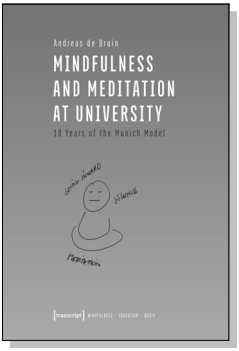

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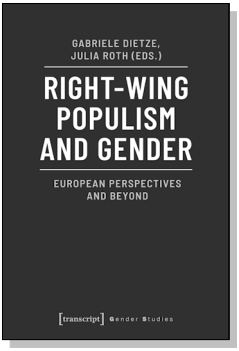

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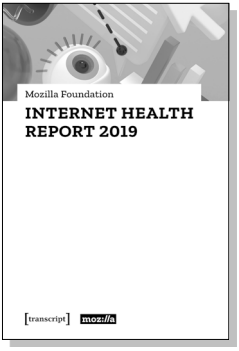

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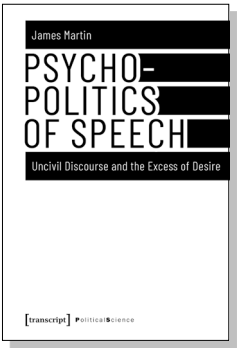

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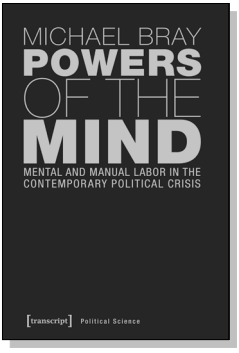

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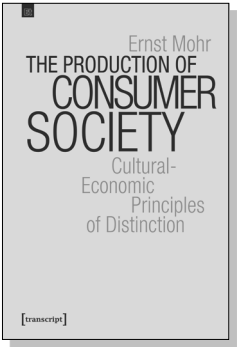

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